

THE PROMISED LAND
A DRAMA

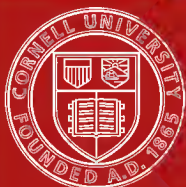
Edward Carpenter

CORNELL
UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY



FROM

Mrs. R. E. Williams



Cornell University Library

The original of this book is in
the Cornell University Library.

There are no known copyright restrictions in
the United States on the use of the text.

THE PROMISED LAND
A DRAMA

THE PROMISED LAND

A Drama of a People's Deliverance

In Five Acts

(In the Elizabethan Style)

By

EDWARD CARPENTER

NEW EDITION

WITH ALTERATIONS



LONDON

SWAN SONNENSCHN & CO., LIM.

25, HIGH ST., BLOOMSBURY, W.C.

1910



PR
4451
P9
1910

F727618

Upon the whole I conclude with this ; the wisdom of the primitive ages was either great or lucky : great, if they knew what they were doing and invented the figure to shadow the meaning : lucky, if without meaning or intending it they fell upon matter which gives occasion to such worthy contemplations

And what if we find here and there a bit of real history underneath, or some things added only for ornament, or times confounded, or part of one fable transferred to another and a new allegory introduced ? Such things could not but occur in stories invented (as these were) by men who both lived in different ages and had different ends, some being more modern, some more ancient,—some having in their thoughts natural philosophy, and others civil affairs.

(Preface to BACON'S "Wisdom of the Ancients.")

PREFACE

THE publication, after a considerable interval of time, of a second edition of this play—originally printed under the title of *Moses*—has given me an opportunity to effect some needed alterations. No doubt, if re-writing the whole, I should in many respects handle it differently; nevertheless the general outline and motive would remain the same—which is of course to show the life-work of Moses in his effort to deliver his people from their bondage, political and religious, and to make a free and reasonable people of them: to show both his failure in this great undertaking, and his success.

Whatever the real facts may be as to the partially historical or wholly legendary nature of the characters and events recorded in the Bible story, it may still be said that the elements of the story are true for all time. The superhuman difficulty of persuading a people to rise to or really accept a higher form of religion than that to which they are accustomed; the same difficulty with regard to their political freedom or institutions of morality; the superstition of the masses, which in these cases credits the leader with miraculous

Preface

powers and tempts him sorely to trade on such credit, and at the same time forces him to adopt all sorts of compromises and unworthy half-measures ; the ideals of the dreamers, and the banal and materialistic popular interpretation of them ; the jealousies of opponents, the misunderstandings of friends, the meanness of half-hearted supporters ; the dissensions of individuals, and their personal ambitions ;—the noble and lifelong devotion of a Moses hardening at last into an almost tyrannous determination to carry his purpose through at all costs ; the cowardice and priestly compromise of an Aaron ; the soldierly loyalty of a Joshua ; the generous misunderstanding and sorrowful defection of a Miriam ; the open rebellion of a Korah ; the plots and counterplots, the uproar and mutiny ; the wreck of all plans, and the apparent certainty of failure ; and after all and finally (as ever) the long-delayed success of the great enterprise—though in a form other than at first contemplated ;—all this, more or less explicit in the Bible, I have endeavoured to throw into a dramatic and rationalized form. Taking the Bible story for basis, my object has been to give it a realistic interpretation—supplying of course the ordinary explanations of the “miraculous” occurrences in the story, and keeping the local colour of the scenes and characters as far as convenient without pedantry.

Preface

With regard to the last-mentioned point it may be objected that the women in the play are allowed more scope and freedom than is usual in the East ; but a reference to the Bible will show that the women of Israel in the early days probably *had* a good deal of independence. I think I am right in saying that the wearing of a veil by a woman is only twice alluded to in the Mosaic books, and then apparently as something out of the ordinary course.

Biblical subjects have hitherto been excluded from the public theatre—presumably because it was thought that the stage was so far an invention of the Evil One that the Bible would be defiled by any such connexion. Now, however, that the theatre is recognized as one of the most potent means of public education, we may hope that the many fine Biblical subjects that exist will no longer be neglected. In case the present play ever should be acted, it is as well to bear in mind that plays on the Elizabethan model, and with a considerable number of scene-changes, should certainly *not* be elaborately staged. The action should go right through with the least possible delay ; and for this end the simplest scenery is the best.

Dramatis Personæ

MOSES.

AARON—*Brother to Moses ; a sleek and crafty priest.*

HUR—*Brother-in-Law to Moses.*

JOSHUA—*Captain of the Host ; young and enthusiastic.*

KORAH—*A young man of the Tribe of Levi, wealthy
and of good descent.*

DATHAN—*A Reubenite, friend to Korah.*

RIGEL—*An easy-going youngish man.*

HEBRON—*A Purveyor of Skins.*

LEVITE, ISRAELITES, MESSENGERS, ETC.

MIRIAM—*Sister to Moses, and Wife to Hur.*

ZILLAH—*Companion to Miriam, and Daughter to
Hebron.*

SCENE—THE DESERT OF SINAI.

THE PROMISED LAND

ACT I.

SCENE I.

The Israelites' Camp at the foot of Sinai—Early Morning.

KORAH *and* JOSHUA.

KOR. What, know you not the news? the news, I say.

JOSH. What is it? Speak.

KOR. Why, this our leader, Moses,
Is married to a Midianitish woman!

JOSH. Tush! man.

KOR. 'Tis true.

JOSH. What witness of the truth?

KOR. The currency of all the camp; and, more,
Her actual and Ethiopian person
Here present with her father Jethro—he
Priest-captain of all Midian—and two sons.

JOSH. 'Tis a princess, then?

KOR. (*with a shrug*) If you will—princess.

The Promised Land

JOSH. And he—

Did his reception rate with this report?—

KOR. Went singly forth in sight of all the camp,
Made reverent obeisance, gravely kissed
His grey-beard father, cosseted his wife,
Fondled the lads, and bade them all fair welcome
Unto the tents of Israel. Truly, sir,
I marvel much that this is news to you.

JOSH. Hastily from the fields of war I come,
And Amalek's encounter. What my lord
Moses deems right to do, I think we'll find
There's mostly some good reason for the doing.

KOR. Ay, thus you word it always—*my lord Moses* :
Is Moses not a man, then, made to err?

JOSH. Out on you, Korah! Was it yesterday
We smote the might of Amalek? to-day
You dare forget his staff held up to heaven,
And God prevailing with us while he prayed?

KOR. Nay, Joshua; yet doth o'er-hasty zeal
For this imperious man not make me proof
To memory of *your* prowess, without which
Jehovah were, I think, with Amalek.

JOSH. See, my lords Hur and Aaron.

Enter HUR and AARON.

KOR.

Welcome, sirs!

HUR. Of Amalek ye spake ?

KOR. Why now, my lord,
I'll speak no longer, since yourselves are here
To yield us personal tidings.

JOSH. Aye, good sirs,
Tell us again how Moses won the day,
For Korah here would credit all to me.

HUR. True, Joshua fought fiercely, but lord Moses
Ordered the battle and ordained success.
For when the sun rose, Aaron and myself
Mounted with him the hill. And Moses stood
Where, seeing, he was seen of all our host.

JOSH. Aye—while we fought there on the dusty
plain,
We took our cues and tactics from his motions,
And when we marked his heaven-pointed hand
A mighty passion made our sinews iron.

HUR. Ten hours, until the setting of the sun,
He stood like an enchanter, this way, that,
Swaying the tide of battle, as he saw
Advantages and openings, or some strength
Or weakness of the enemy. And his arm
Fell, rose, and fell—with ever-failing force
Ever renewed : at last, at droop of night,
We set him on a stone and stayed his strength,
Waved high both mighty arms, and won the day.

The Promised Land

AARON (*sleekly.*) No less in all, Jehovah's mighty
arm :

Meseems you merge God in his minister.

KOR. Ay, so it is. You say too well, lord Aaron ;
Methinks we let this man increase his measure
Until he hides Jehovah from our eyes,
Standing before his face.

JOSH. (*aside*) O dastard falsehood !

AARON. And well I know that he, our noble
brother,

Meekest of all men, would, of all, desire
This least—to magnify himself before us.
Seeing indeed his one word was to us :
Your father's God hath sent me. What am I ?
Jehovah is your God.

JOSH. But evermore
Moses his mouthpiece and interpreter,
And only intimate ; to whom alone
He gave the rod of our deliverance ;
Who at his high word knew to plague and spare,
To plaster man and beast with boils and blains,
To scourge with hailstones and to scorch with fire,
To strike, and still to stay the sword ; to bruise,
And ever to harden while he bruised, until
The heart of Pharaoh, brutalized to stone,
Could only break beneath the rod of Moses ;
To whom in secret counsel He made plain,

Where no path was, the way of our escape,
And led us to the waters where he wrought
The ruin of all Egypt, and our rescue.

AARON. You speak, my friend, with honourable
warmth.

Indeed the way was marvellous : withal,
Though 'tis most fitting that the common faith
Should so accept these wonders, we perceive
It magnifies them also beyond measure,
Making mere accidents portentous, and
Unknown effects of Nature miracles ;
Herein, indeed, doing but scanty justice
To his wise forethought, the which we, who
know,

In all this matter mainly recognize—
My lordly brother's ; who, so long ago,
A shepherd lad in Midian, laid his plans,
Explored these regions, mapped them in his
mind,

And marked each feature of our future march ;
Ay, from the mountains where he fed the flocks
Oft watched the roaring tide at full o' the moon
Make furious onset o'er its long flat sands,
And saw, with eye of fancy, the white crests
Of Pharaoh's archers founder in the flood.

JOSH. O my lord Aaron ! say, 'tis popular
To magnify these wonders ; can you yet
Reduce to common rating these great signs—

The Promised Land

The flight of Jacob and the fall of Egypt,
The wall of waters and the pillared fire ?

HUR. Yea, saw we not the finger of his power—
By day a pillared cloud, by night a fire—
Point visibly the path of flight for us ?

KOR. Nay, this is childish. You know, Joshua,
The public voice will call a beacon-crate,
High flaring for a sign before the host,
God's finger. Be it so. You know full well,
Being skilled in war, no myriads on the march
O'er endless level sands can otherwise
Order their straggling armies, save (as all
The nomad nations of the desert use)
By bearing van-ward a high beacon flame,
Whose cloudy column leads the day's advance
And closes each night's bivouac with fire.
Such is God's finger to the people, but
To us, who know——

JOSH. To me His finger still.

KOR. (*with a shrug*) Ay, if you will.

JOSH. O this is traitorous !
A moment since 'twas Moses ye would slight,
On plea of higher loyalty to God ;
And having merged him in his Master—made
His honour handmaid to a higher—now,
When ye should sound the loudest stop of praise,
With qualifying *but*s ye bate your breath,

ACT I. SC. I. A Drama

And in the compass of an *if* confine
The fame of Moses and the Lord Jehovah—
A twofold blasphemy.

AARON. That is a word
Which argues unripe thought: nay, nay, my
 friend,
Your part is ill composed. Yet I, who now
Am no more young, can prize your haughty zeal
More than the carriage of my dignity
Chafes at your speech, alike injurious
To me and Korah. I have learnt, that truth
Is ever best, and ever in the end
Of most advantage unto those we honour.
And I, who always in my own heart's shrine
Have worshipped my more highly-favoured
 brother
And Him he serves, do now so honour them,
I would not for the rumour of the world
Let the least falsehood seem a part of them,
Or any untrue seeming make them more
Than truth doth manifest them.

KOR. If my lord
Will give me licence—as a crystal cup
Unto the wine whose favour it forestalls,
His words are to my thought.

AARON. Nor, Joshua,
Do I conceive ill-will or any thought,
In this, of ill against you, whose high skill

The Promised Land

And courage in the conduct of our arms
Are matters of public mark, making our eyes,
In envy of your valour, overlook—
What should increase their worship sevenfold—
The youthful slightness of your years.

JOSH. My lord,
And you too, Korah, whose old comradeship
Gives my tongue too much licence, let me crave
Your gentle pardon. And I pray you charge
These hasty words to no more harmful whim
Than the o'er-sudden instinct of my nature.
Your servant is as one of these dry torrents
That, strewing all the waste with stones, sustains
Scarcely a scanty verdure. In the spring
The impetuous waters, plunging with a roar
Of loud assurance, make the silence leap ;
But ere the summer there is hardly found
Enough to fill the hollow of one's hand.
You, my lord Aaron, with more affluence
And less excess, are like the kindly Nile,
Which, with smooth movement and a gracious
 mien,
Rises and falls to meet the wants of men,
Fails never in lip-service, and in season
Fills all the land with its fertility—
I should have known this sooner.

AARON. Sir, you do
Me more than justice, and your own worth less.

ACT I. SC. I. A Drama

Yet since, my friends, we all are one again,
Leave we the appraisal of our qualities
To common estimation : 'tis enough,
To be, and to remain, friends. Know you now
That shortly—ere the fierce meridian glare,
Making these bare rocks flicker like a furnace,
Leaves shade and shelter only in our tents—
Moses, my lordly brother, solemnly
Calls a convention of the camp of Jacob,
Wherein he minds to make us witnesses
Of his high purpose and Jehovah's will?
Come, let us hence : the javelin-shafted sun
Strikes sidelong even now the mountain stairs
Of yellow Sinai. Come, Korah ! Lords,
Farewell ! [Sunrise.

JOSH. Farewell, my lord, till at the mountain foot
We meet again. [*Exeunt AARON and KORAH.*

I too must to the tent
Of Moses with all speed. Farewell, my lord !

HUR. Farewell.

JOSH. Clouds gather on the mountain : ere midday
We shall have stormy music. [Exit.

HUR. So I fear.

Aaron has evil in his heart, I know.
Else why these wily airs and easy words,
This arm-in-arm with Korah ? But he slights
The highest Name too, and that is enough.

[Exit.

ACT I. Sc. 2. A Drama

Even the goats give only half their milk.
Water is scant, and very bitter too ;
Those who know best, and have explored the
land,

Say this one valley—whose whole crop of verdure
Is not one fat Nile-field's worth—is the greenest
In all the desert, and the desert vast.

What think you, lady Miriam, shall we die,
And leave our graves, white in the wilderness,
A laughing-stock for ever unto Egypt ?

MIR. What matter ? They do murmur well who
love

The fleshpots more than freedom—a mouthful
more

Than brother, lover, husband, child, or wife.
Let them go crouch and cringe at Egypt's feet ;
I am content with somewhat more than that.

ZIL. Yet you, dear lady, suffer, as I think :
This hard and scanty fare is not for you,
Ere little a princess in Egypt's lap.

MIR. How a princess ?

ZIL. Methinks, where my lord Moses
Was high priest in the City of the Sun
A counsellor of Pharaohs, and a king
In occult science, his accomplished sister
Were little lower than princess. Yet she
Has chosen exile with a horde of slaves.

The Promised Land

MIR. Slaves, Zillah ? there's no slavery is worse
Than this—to witness wrong and not to right it.
What ? think you damask couches, silken veils,
Or peacock-fans could fly away the thoughts
Which stung sleep from my eyelids when I saw
Jacob in bondage and his children chained ?
My father's children choking in the fields,
The blind sun beating on their backs—a scourge
More fatal than their masters'—and their faces
Ground in the dust beneath the heel of Egypt ?
But God gave ear unto their cry, and came
In thunder from the mountains. In that day
He blew a blast as one who trumpets war ;
And Egypt was afraid ; all her gods fled ;
He whirled them in the whirlwind of his wrath,
And slew them from the blackness of his face ;
He plagued their wise with worms. So He arose
And led us forth like sheep : he dried the flood
Before us with his feet. Then he returned
And troubled Pharaoh in the fearful sea.
Ah, dear friend, we shall live now and not die.
This stillness is the stillness that doth wait
On all great action : having struck, we stand
Alone, in awful silence with ourselves
And One who sees us. When the past is past,
Then forward ; the new life lies on before.

ZIL. Know you the news ?

MIR.

What news ?

ACT I. Sc. 2. A Drama

ZIL. Why, none, I think,
For this arrival is a young report
Of one day's currency and little credit.

MIR. You speak of Zipporah.

ZIL. They named her thus.

MIR. Enough. The idle rumour of the camp,
Whilst marring matters of the greatest moment,
Makes mountains of a mouse ; it miscreates,
Then mocks its own creation.
Leave it aside. The timely aid of Jethro
Shall much advantage Moses, without doubt ;
And this renewal of ancient amity
Enliven his good courage. For, I fear,
The craven murmuring of the false crowd
Hath much dejected him, and made seem far
The furtherance of his high enterprise.
I must within. The sun breaks even now
Over the East, and all the camp's astir
Toward the mountain foot. O fortunate
Be the dark issue of this day's debate ! *[Exit.]*

ZIL. I dwell alone,
As many do, with my own heart's desire ;
Yet dare not look upon it lest it die,
So slenderly 'tis fashioned. Do I thank
The gods because of Amalek ? No, no !
'Tis news to numb and freeze me. If he were
Not, as he is, the centre of all eyes—

The Promised Land

But, even so, unglorified in this,
Discomfited, forsaken, I were flushed
And full of sudden courage and sweet aims.
For then I could befriend him, and be sure
My services were grateful. Now, alas!
I see it all too clearly: he will turn,
Give me a kindly nod, once, twice; and then
Let the great heap of honour thrust upon him
Hide my remembrance utterly. Away!
Prosperity is ne'er in place with love.

Enter JOSHUA.

But see! He comes!

JOSH. (*aside, seeing Z.*) Now Moses may and must wait.

(*To ZILLAH*) What, my child?

ZIL. Are you amazed, my lord, to see me?

JOSH. Nay.
And yet, for once, you were not in my thoughts.

ZIL. (*vexed*) Indeed, how should I be? there's much, I warrant,
To thrust my likeness from them.

JOSH. Oftentimes
You come before me: in the thick of battle,
In camp, in council, and between these eyes
And the importunate men who din my ears:
And oft I think, so suddenly you come,
Yourself have knowledge of it. Is it so?

The Promised Land

And weighty cares of state, which leave no time
For lesser interests.

JOSH. 'Tis very true
Just now I'm charged with somewhat pressing
matter,
Which hardly brooks delay.

ZIL. (*huffed*) Pray, do not tarry.
.If so you would be gone, go lightly, sir,
I'll ask no reasons, only pray godspeed.

JOSH. So be it, little lady imperious,
And harder to o'ercome than Amalek ;
May we meet soon again—with better grace
And more of understanding.
[Exit, with an obeisance.

ZIL. Lady imperious !
He mocks me, and he wearies of me now.
This haste, I trow, and urgent business,
Are but a pretext—thinly so disguised—
To excuse him from my presence.
[Exit and curtain.

SCENE 3.

Within the Tent of MOSES.

MOSES *and* JETHRO.

JETH. This is a thing, my lord,
Of general acceptance. Take my word.

ACT I. SC. 3. A Drama

And since I am your father, both in years
And dear regard of close relationship,
Ponder it well. Nor is it only this,
That each day's work (for I have watched you,
even
From dawn to dusk, with most unwearied tact
Judge this litigious people—even until
Merely the act of audience was oppressive)—
Not only that such labour doth exceed
The entire extent of one ability ;
But that 'tis politic withal—I say
'Tis politic to delegate some power,
If in appearance only. Therefore choose
Men from the multitude, upright and true,
Men loving justice more than gold, God-fearing
Rulers of thousands, hundreds, fifties, tens,
To stand before the people in your stead.
Let them judge minor matters, small affrays,
Markings of cattle, rights of pasture, water,
Abuse of manners, marriage ; and do you
The greater judge ; yet no less in the less
Ever reserve supreme authority.
So shall my lord be no less only Moses,
Only that Moses shall be multiplied
To thousandfold effect. For now, mark this,
My lord has made a nation out of nought,
And it becomes him, having rescued it
From captive chains, to clothe its nakedness
With law and office, and the badge of order.

The Promised Land

Therein not thinking scorn to imitate
What we have learnt, who in this desert-life
Have had some fruit of long experience.
Such as I told you is the tried tradition
Of all the tribes of Midian. Follow it,
For there is danger in the course you favour.
Headstrong and sturdy is this people, proud
And powerful, and very hard to govern ;
A horse with heaving flanks, nostril aflame,
And neck all muscle, marrow enough to take
Water and fire for whomsoe'er it will ;
But hard to curb. Sit but this people lightly,
Let it but fancy self its proper lord,
Your officers its own affections,
Your law its impulse, and each act the whim
Of its each wayward moment. Well : then well.
But let—so mark me—let
The saddle chafe, the spur once gall its flank,
Let it once seize the bit between its teeth,
Once catch a glimpse of you astride its back,
All will be lost. Beware, I say, beware !
There will be heard a cry : Who is this man ?
Who is this fellow ? Who appointed him
Prince and judge over us ? Beware, I say,
Beware ! you take too much upon you, Moses.

MOSES. My good and worthy father, what you
say
I will bethink me of. Your precepts are,

ACT I. Sc. 3. A Drama

Be sure, no target of contempt, but stuff
For deepest thought. Too well, alas! I know
The doubts and dangers of this enterprise.
The camp, even now, is full of chill distrust ;
The public heart harks back to Egypt, eyes
My each act jealously. I know it well.
Yet shall I—I, who in all this, first and last,
Have never had one choice my own which was
not

Israel's good, nor one thought willingly
Not of the Eternal's willing—shall I, too,
Take coward counsel, and, lest I should suffer,
Slacken the reins a little—even a little—
Or slip the envious loops on other fingers ?
Yet I will ponder this. And though my lord
Will now be taking leave, yet hopefully
Through oft-renewed occasion shall his servant
Still reap advantage of his riper age
And well-maturéd wisdom.

JETH. All will be well, my son ; and be assured
You shall have friend's reception from our tribes.
And when ye seek the land of promise, as far
As with us lies, Midian shall give godspeed.
Meanwhile, not without tears, I recommend
Zipporah to your tender heart of care.
That she should leave us was inevitable,
Yet in her nearness did we oft annul
The future's reckoning, and for sight of joy

The Promised Land

Forget the sum of sorrow. Fare you well !
She is yours henceforward. Use her tenderly.

MOSES. My gentle father, be assured of it ;
My wife and children shall not want respect
Or warmth of welcome. Neither shall your child
And her two striplings. We'll have public
honours.

So many seasons of constrained divorce
Will make our union second nuptials.

JETH. And I will send you from my camp in Midian
A brief and pithy digest of our laws,
Done into parchment. This with those of Egypt
You shall do well comparing, so to note
What various uses mostly separate
Landed from nomad races, and select
What may commend itself to your approval.
Farewell ! but first I'll see my Zipporah,
Take sad leave of her, then of you farewell.

MOSES. I will go with you : let us to her tent.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE 4.

*An open space at the foot of Mount Sinai, the lower
part of which is a steep cliff with a few hillocks
at its base.*

RIGEL and an Israelite. *Crowd gradually assembles.*

ISR. What, sir, you would make bricks in Egypt ?

RIG. Indeed, sir, I would, rather than this. Go to ! is it not better to make bricks than to be set out for the baking. The very rocks are red here, like a furnace, and the ground swelters fire. The sun stands overhead in the dry heaven, and in the midmost silence of the day no sound is heard save the cry of the parched crags as they split beneath his fury. If we want water, we must not drink lest the flocks die of thirst ; and if we desire meat, we must beware of eating lest we all perish of starvation. To remain here is to prepare famine ; and to move on is to fall into the hands of our starving neighbours. There's not a man among them but knows us fat from the fleshpots of Egypt, and I doubt we shall be a prey to many such jackals.

ISR. Truly, sir, you take a gloomy view of affairs.

RIG. I do.

ISR. Methinks that liberty alone is a great dispensation. It is the greatest gift the gods can give to men.

RIG. This is but liberty to die ; and man has always that.

ISR. Moreover, have we not seen and heard ? Can we now doubt that the God of our fathers, of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, has bethought

The Promised Land

him of his ancient promises, and besped him on wings of deliverance from the mountains.

RIG. Sir, you have a sanguine temper. For myself, I doubt and misdoubt, even against myself. That Moses should bring with him a new God, and call his name Jehovah, is but reasonable. Who leads a people cannot well do less. Yet, mark you, our fathers were plain men, yet did they never tell us of Jehovah. Why?—because they knew him not.

ISR. 'Tis likely he hath changed his name since they first came to Egypt.

RIG. It may be so. A silence of four centuries leaves much for speculation.

ISR. Who, then, was He who with à high hand led us forth from Egypt, made a way through the waters and fed us with manna and with quails? Ay, and will feed us again, to the everlasting dismay of Egypt's gods.

RIG. Call him Jehovah, if you will. But why put our good father Abraham in pledge for such a sorry God?

ISR. A sorry God!

RIG. Indeed, I think the gods of Egypt every whit as proper and wholesome. What has he to commend him? This Red Sea, you will say, and

ACT I. SC. 4. A Drama

our deliverance from bondage. But what is the end of our deliverance?—a dry and choking desert: not a strike of flax, not a beard of barley. No water, fish, fowl, fruitage, herb, or root. No hares among the corn, no palms to give pleasant shade, no wild vines for the ass to browse, no ass even. Only hyssop and lentisk, to make brooms withal. Go to! the gods of Egypt can at least make water!

ISR. Do you not tremble, sir, to use such blasphemies?

RIG. Moreover, mark this. Here is a God without temples or priests. Belike Osiris has sent a departed soul into this company; but if we neither see it, nor know it, nor receive any effect from it, what is it to us? If this Jehovah were to strike me dead, now, that were something generous and substantial, and I might be converted in the act, and so become a willing witness to my own unbelief. But he will not. There was a persuasion, too, in the mysteries of Egypt, even to the multitude. The sky-pointing columns of the porch, the fierce light on the huge lintel-stones, and then the gloom and silence of the Holy Place, the mystic scrollwork, and the unapproachable awe of the Holy of Holies, the glimmer of the lamp, and the watch-

The Promised Land

ful eye of the sacred hawk. It is a sorry god that has no temple.

ISR. Who knows but our leader, Moses, may frame us one? I marvel, sir, if you are so enamoured of the brick-fields by the Nile, that you should have cast in lots with us who were otherwise minded. It is ill-conditioned of you, in respect both of manners and prudence, to withdraw yourself from the protection of Egypt's gods in order to place your impertinent carcass in the territory of One whom you weary not to blaspheme.

RIG. Indeed, I grant you. But, for me, I cannot square myself to any argument; I break faith with my clearest convictions. You argue well: I should be in Egypt; but I am here. There is something more than argument in that; but I will not tell you what. Lo! our Moses. Let us hear what he will say.

ISR. Ay, let us hear him.

Enter MOSES and JOSHUA. MOSES takes his stand on a rising ground.

JOSH. O Israel, keep silence! for the lord
And shepherd of your loves will speak with you.

MOSES. O men of Israel! I come before you—
Because the way is long, and the life hard—

ACT I. Sc. 4. A Drama

To give you, if you will, such heartening words
As I may devise or God declare by me.

VOICES. Speak ! speak, Lord Moses.

MOSES. God is but one. He whom your fathers
worshipped

Is, and still is, for ever. Holy place
Nor temple holds him wholly, for he dwells
Within men's hearts, and they who worship him,
In all worlds, are his temple. Merciful
And gracious is he, and long-suffering
Of sinful men, albeit, who are guilty
Will he by no means clear. He is arisen.
He o'er your foes hath gloriously triumphed,
And borne you forth on eagles' wings from Egypt.
And now, behold ! To you he saith, " Arise,
Come nigh and look upon my face and know me.
The desert, too, is mine ; and I am near you,
Even when the wells are dry. Look up, look up
Unto this mountain ! make you clean ! for I,
Jehovah, the Eternal, do adjure you.
Remember Egypt and her gods no more,
Her idols and her bloody offerings,
Her priesthood and her perjuries. Here, turn—
Here, in the stillness of my presence, turn you,
Turn you to Me, my heart shall be your home ;
And I will make of you a holy people,
A realm of priests. Nor shall ye need a temple ;
For like a silken tent is heaven suspended

The Promised Land

Upon the eternal columns of the hills,
And ye do dwell before me now and always."

ISR. What, mark you that ? A kingdom of priests !
We shall all be priests, and wear jewelled garments.

RIG. Hark !

MOSES. These are the words of God. Hear, Israel,
Hear and obey ! Go, make you clean. Remember
Egypt no more. Go, make an end of moaning.
What, O faint hearts and fearful ! would ye back
To break your shoulders to the bricks again,
Like very beasts of burden ? Go, I say,
Turn ye, repent, lest He break forth upon you,
Consume you from his presence in his wrath.
What, saw ye not, and heard not ? think ye now
The Eternal One, by many signs and wonders,
Hath led you forth with mischief for to kill you ?
Behold, now, I do stand 'twixt him and you ;
Slay me, if so ye will ; but and if not,
Whate'er is in your hearts to ask of him
Lay before me. His words are in my ears
By day and night continually for ever.—
And ye shall live. What ? when ye were athirst,
Struck we not water straightway from the hard
Heart of the rocks ? and when ye were an hun-
gered,

ACT I. Sc. 4. A Drama

Brought He not bread and quails at our command ?

VOICE. Why shuts he now his hand, then ? Moses, speak,

For if we starve, our blood is on thy head.

MOSES. Look up, O Israel ! Behold the cloud,
As of our wanderings, rests solemnly
Upon the mountain summit ; and his glory
The ancient light of all creation,
Glows through it. Thither now will I withdraw
To secret commune with him. Open then,
Open me, Israel, your hearts, that I
May bear your burdens and your joys before him.
[Pause.]

What, will ye be silent ?

2ND VOICE. We do repent, lord Moses ; plead thou for us.

1ST VOICE. Yet, if we starve, our blood be on thy head !

MOSES (*somewhat bitterly*). God dwells beyond your dreaming, all of you,
Yet will he save you, even by my hand.
Farewell ! And forty days from hence we'll hold
A solemn feast. Till then, abide ye all
In holy brotherhood, that God may bless you.

[Exit, mounting the rocks, accompanied by AARON and JOSHUA.]

The Promised Land

RIG. Mark that, my friend. I wish you joy of your new religion! Will you note how this man continually removes from us all evidence of the God? There is no image of him,—but the jagged rocks; no sign,—but silence; and his holy temple—is the common sky. We look, and look; and still see only Moses. For this Jehovah is as arid as the wilderness in which he dwells; and I, for one, do question his very being.

ISR. This speech of Moses hath somewhat turned the edge of my appetite. Yet some god must needs dwell in this land.

RIG. Indeed, I cannot tell. Belike it is a waste place, generally rejected of deities; stubborn and incapable of improvement; a refuse-heap, and a place for the clapping of dusty shoes. And Moses hath brought us here to make himself as a god over us.

Enter KORAH and DATHAN.

KOR. Well, you are mine now. Heard you e'er the like?

Such "I's" and "we's," such starch "at our commands,"

Such threats, withal; I tell you, Dathan, he
Hath one mind in him: he will be our king—
And he shall not.

ACT I. Sc. 4. A Drama

DATH. Not if two wills avail
'Gainst one, when that one's Moses'.

KOR. Two? doubt not
We are but samples of the common mind.
All men are with us, if they did but know it.
Yet, since the matter's delicate, we must
Move slow at first, and seem less than we are.
The beast must learn its rider can be thrown
Ere it will throw him. Therefore 'tis for us
To lift the harness, and adroitly show
The mob its sores, with one hand, with the other
Crook finger at the cause of suffering.
See, Aaron comes; he quitted me but now
In conduct of his brother, promising
Speedy return. He, if we can but hold
His over-supple heart, will serve us well.

Enter AARON, from the mountain.

Welcome, my lord! Is it well with my lord
Your brother Moses?

AARON. Alas! he is somewhat
Dejected at the cold reception
His ardent words encountered.

KOR. Pitiful,
Doubtless, it was; and yet in some regards—
In some regards, I say, 'twas imminent.
If I might venture words, there was a lack
Of qualifying judgment in his speech.

The Promised Land

He stoops not to the public ear, and that
Is the prime offence of all.

AARON. Too true, my lord.
But who have you here ?

KOR. A friend, my lord, a friend. My trusty
friend, Dathan.

AARON. What made you, Master Dathan, of this
speech ?

DATH. By'r leave, my lord, I fear it wrought col-
lapse
Upon the public mind ; as when we thought
Bread rained from heaven, and found it only
manna.

AARON. Most true. My brother's lofty mind out-
soars

The people's love—his own expediency.
He should have spoke, with fluent lips, of lands
Of golden promise, running milk and honey ;
So painted them that flushed expectancy,
Perforce forgetting Egypt and the past,
Had ta'en these present ills for gain. Mean-
while,

He might, with proper circumstance of pomp—
A temple and some solemn offices—
Have made Jehovah seem less far from us
Than now. But, though I ever moot these
things,

ACT I. Sc. 5. A Drama

He ever, with some lofty hand of scorn,
Waves them—and, as I fear, the people's love—
Away, as most unworthy of regard.

KOR. This mind, I fear, may take some evil cast,
And so work ruin in our commonwealth.

AARON. It may ; thereby
Entailing grievous divorce of our loves.

KOR. Our duty lies the way of common weal.

AARON. Doubtless.
But we will talk this farther, and at leisure.
Come, my lord Korah, and my friend, come
hence. [*Exeunt.*

RIG. (*to ISR.*) Well, you will with me now. Away,
the place is once more a desert. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE 5.

Interior of a Booth, hung with furs and skins.

ZILLAH. *Enter* HEBRON.

HEB. What, thou here, little one ? I warrant now
Some mischief's in thee, or thou hadst not come.

ZIL. I am my father's daughter, and I come
Compact of filial duty ; doubting not
Thou hadst, this lonely while, begot thyself
Into some scrape by thy queer, crabbed ways,
And wert in need of womanly relief.

The Promised Land

HEB. Well, well. I have no patience with these women!

But come, thou ever hadst some easy knack
Of numbers: get thee now my pen and run
These items into one; and let the sum
Be larger than I hope. For since we pitched
Camp in this scrub this is my all of gain.

ZIL. (*taking the pen*)

*Alack-a-day, alack-a-day!
Love slipt out upon the way;
No one wist it,
No one missed it:
Ah, alas! alack-a-day!*

HEB. What's that thou art singing about, "Slipt out on the way?"

ZIL. Indeed, I know not, father. 'Tis an old song, belike of one who had a money-bag, and the money was lost.

HEB. Have a care, now, with those figures. (*To himself*) The nights grow colder at this season; there will be a push for skins, and I will yet square out the past losses.

ZIL. Why art thou so careful o'er thy moneys, father? Who knows whether in ~~this endless~~ desert we shall ever be able ~~to spend~~ them?

HEB. Confusion! What is that to thee, minx?

ACT I. Sc. 6. A Drama

Hast done? Come, take this tablet to our old Haggi, the money-lender, and be back in the period of a sigh; and see that thou look neither to the right hand nor to the left.

[Exit ZILLAH.]

Well, it's a good girl. [Exit.]

SCENE 6,

An open space before Mount Sinai, same as scene 4.

Enter ZILLAH (L) with veil over lower part of face.

ZIL. This way, I have no mind to look about me.

What? [Looks down.]

Enter RIGEL (R.).

RIG. Why starts my pretty mistress, as I were

An ugly ferret darting o'er her foot?

So veiled too! I were hardly sure of her,

But that a line is hint enough to love.

ZIL. I pray you let me pass, sir!

RIG. If you will.

I will do only what you will. Yet hear me.

Tarry a moment; as I love you, tarry,

And give me any audience; if you will,

Command me any errand; let me speed

This tablet for you to the end o' the world.

Best set me to some danger—what you will:

The sombre lightnings of those eyes, that pierce

The Promised Land

And over-peer the whiteness of your veil,
Frown me to daring madness.

ZIL. You will best
Please me, sir, by your absence.

RIG. There's no daring
In that. Put me to some moon-melting task ;
Give me to fight the dragon in the sky,
That eats the red-hot fury of the sun
And pastures in eclipses, and I'll do it
To prove my love ; give me to tame the sea,
Or bring alive her two blind puppies from
The lioness's dugs, and I will do it
To touch thy heart of iron ; give me——

ZIL. I give you quit, sir ; as you love me, let
Me hear no more ; see, now I do beseech you
Who might command.

RIG. (*inclining his head*) And I, who might
contemn,
Yield questionless obedience. For the nonce,
Farewell ! Yet grant me favour in your
thoughts,
For I shall not forget you.

ZIL. Farewell, sir ! [*Exit.*]

RIG. The old story : as it was before the Pyramids
were proportioned, is now, and will be when the
children of Jacob are forgotten from the face of

ACT I. Sc. 6. A Drama

the earth. Indeed, she fools me with those eyes of hers. But for them, I should now be a hundred leagues from here, in pleasurable Egypt. But for them, my lips had found for her ears a host of flattering arguments; and my hands, perchance, the hardihood to urge them. And that long ago. But now I gape and stare, stand stockish still, and hang my tongue like a calf in the sun, and will no will but hers. But, madness! I must win her, and I will.

[Takes a seat.

Enter KORAH and AARON.

KOR. Indeed, my lord, 't has ever most surprised me

To see your pliant bending to his will,
And admirable patience. Thus to play
The second part—to bear the brunt of battle
And share no glory—is ungrateful work.

[Clamour within.

What's this?—a sound of riot!

Enter Rioters, followed by DATHAN and others.

1ST RIOTER. Where's Moses? We will have Moses.
We will have bread!

KOR. How now, my men? Where's Moses?
why, ye know

Moses has gone, these many days are past,
Upon the mountain. *[Pointing up.*

The Promised Land

1ST RIOTER. Shame upon him, then,
To leave us here to perish! we'll have bread,
We will have bread!

2ND RIOTER. Some one speak to us, ho!
Tell us we shall not perish—you, lord Korah.

KOR. I? what am I? I have no power among
you.

When gave ye me gage of authority?
Moses, he is your captain——

DATH. And has led——

KOR. You to this pass; ask him.

VOICES. We find him not.

KOR. Then here is Aaron; he is Moses' brother,
And knows far more than I or any one;
Hear him and follow him. He is your prince!
(*Aside*) Here is a pretty fry!

2ND RIOTER. Ho, Aaron! our lord Aaron! Ho,
give ear!

Ho! he has bread, and will speak to us; ho!

VOICES. Aaron, lord Aaron! Quick, to the moun-
tain foot!

RIG. Now if this Aaron finds a way to talk
These clamorous skins full, a sleek tongue hath
he.

ACT I. Sc. 6. A Drama

KOR. 'Tis well said, sir.

[AARON and KORAH are hurried by the crowd
to a rising ground at the mountain foot.]

AARON. What shall I do, Korah? . . . What shall
I say, Korah?

KOR. Speak, my lord, speak! gain something by
delay.

Divert their rage with words, humour their
whim

With talk of Egypt; Moses may—who knows?—
Be lost upon the mountain; then this stroke
Will make the people yours.

VOICES. Ho! Aaron, speak!

KOR. Speak! all is well. [The people gather round.]

AARON. My friends, ye have me here
At no small disadvantage; for indeed
Your very intent is new to me, and I
Stand here before you without furniture
Of any meditation or smooth gift
Of easy words to make rough matters plain.
Yet, if ye will have patience of my speech—

VOICES. Speak on, lord Aaron—thy mind shall be
ours.

AARON. I will make shift to show you how I think
This matter stands. My lord and brother, Moses,

The Promised Land

Having ever in his heart your highest welfare,
Brought you into this desert. He hath seen—
For twice hath he relieved it—your sad state
Of eloquent starvation ; not less sad
Because long custom makes it seem less strange.
And now in this last worst extremity
Hath he—for did he not so advertise you—
Withdrawn into this mountain, doubtless there
To lay your wants before the Lord Jehovah.

IST RIOTER. Wherefore then tarries he? We
perish.

VOICE. Why,
If he would deliver, doth he now delay?

AARON. There, then, ye ask me what I cannot
answer.

In this I am as one of you : I know
Nothing ; and can but with uncertain tact
Put forth a timid peradventure. For
I see—as ye see—on the mountain summits
The fierce forked-lightning fly and flicker, I hear
The giant cry and quaver of the thunder ;
And know that some of you will say,
The voice of God ! Mark, now He speaks with
Moses !

But we—we wait, and weary grow of waiting ;
No sign comes to us, no voice of salvation,
But silence and the sign of famine. What
If some dread mishap hath befallen him ?

ACT I. Sc. 6. A Drama

Or, darker still—I tremble—doth he wait
 Winning no help from Heaven for our state ?

DATH. Up, up, my friends ! we will tarry no
 longer. And you, lord Aaron, up, make us gods
 which shall go before us ; for as for this Moses—
 the man that brought us up out of the land of
 Egypt—we wot not what is become of him.

VOICES. Ay, make us gods that will go.

AARON. Well, then, I will speak openly with you.
 Ye pipe like children that have lost their dams,
 And whine for bread, which neither I nor Moses—
 As ye well know—can give you. What ? The
 blame

Lies not in us, nor in this land : remember,
 In Egypt many famines did befall you
 Far worse than this, whose mere comparison
 Makes this a nothing, a convenient fast,
 A mourning for a cat, no more.

1ST RIOTER. Ah ! there,
 In Egypt, we could call on Apis ; cry,
 And have a hearing.

AARON. What, then, hinders now
 To sue the hornéd god ; why, he, I think—
 Since he informeth all fertility—
 Is wroth at your denial, and perchance
 Plagues you with droughts and fierce teeth-
 whitening famine

The Promised Land

Because his altar unadorned remains
Of flower, or song, or due of sacrifice.

KOR. O noble Aaron !

VOICES. O Apis, hear us ! hear us and forgive !

1ST RIOTER. Now, O lord Aaron, make us for our
need

An altar for our worship.

AARON. Why, then, break
Your earrings from your ears, man, woman, and
child.

Gold, pure gold shall it be—a golden bull
To blaze in the morning sun ; and when ye see it,
Fall down and worship : It shall be your god.

DATH. Lord Aaron, live for ever !

AARON. And doubtless he will hear you, and will
turn

This desert to a garden, and the ground
Shall gush with water, and your god shall go
Before your faces : ye shall sit you down
To eat and drink, and shall rise up to play.

KOR. O most, most noble Aaron !

*[The people pluck off their ornaments and
cast them at the feet of AARON.]*

AARON. To-morrow, then, we'll meet. That is the
day

Moses appointed for the feast. Away !

[They disperse.]

Curtain.

ACT II

SCENE 1.

MOSES *alone on Mount Sinai—two graven tables beside him—Thunderstorm.*

MOSES. See, here is peace a moment from this people.

O how the thunder leaps from cloud to cloud,
Peals high like trumpets in the loft of heaven,
And then roars downwards, as though God himself

Strode on the whirlwind! And, indeed, he does.
For since the hour when in this very land,
At Horeb, I set eyes on the mimosa
Flaming in golden bloom beneath the blue—
God's gift of perfect glory to the world—
I doff the sandals of all thought, and deem
The whole earth sacred.

O ye priests of Egypt,
Fair thanks to you; and yet farewell for ever!
Keep high and unprofaned your holy selves.
Let sanctity secure you from all use
Or human love hence even to the end.
Be wise; and scornful of the herd. Be wise—

The Promised Land

Be gods in your own eyes ; yet know that God
Laughs at your wisdom. Ay, who gave you
grace

To teach the mass a lie ?—with mummy-cloths
Of priestly fiction muffle up the truth,
Which He made living and which ye make
dead ?

Surely not she ye worship as the Soul—
Isis, the ever-virgin source of life,
The *I am that I am* of Nature, one,
Eternal, infinite, equal-free to all !
Who will be heard of all her children, as
To-day in thunder-accent of this people—
Which trembles, stammering, “ The voice of
God ! ”

And stays to touch the mountain lest it die.
Yea, in the day I saw the tree made flame
In that eternal Presence which has been
Our dwelling in all ages, the *I am*
Before the mountains were brought forth, or e'er
The earth and world were fashioned : in that
hour

The glory of the priesthood of all Egypt
Vanished in visions of a realm of priests—
A kingdom of high priests, a holy nation,
God dwelling with them in their midst, confessed
And feared of all alike. Shall this not be—
A people walking openly on earth,
With understanding, not as beasts that die,

ACT II. SC. I. A Drama

But loosed from servile chains and tyranny,
And drawing noble conscience from Within,
And equal freedom . . . A people wise and free,
With self-appointed laws ; and officers
Who urge the common welfare, and command
Only in virtue of the public ends
They favour, not their own. A people strong
In battle or in stress of evil fortune
Because indeed their hearts are undivided
In mutual duty. Such at least the dream
God spread before me day and night and day,
Watching the flocks in Midian ; yea, and now,
Though hard the way and wearisome, I hear
The thunder and am glad : the thwarted sense
Leaps at his voice of power, and hears it ring
All down the ages to triumphal ends,
Rejoicing with a more than mortal joy.

So let it be. The dream, if false, is mine,
And made but for a moment ; true ? 'tis His
To last for ever, till this one green vale
Become the cradle of another world.
Hard is the way, and stubborn are their hearts ;
I speak and know not if they hear me ; heaven
Opens above them, but they bow to earth.
They run, like children, after rotten chaff,
Idols and empty shows ; yet shall I turn
And teach a lie, too—for they will it so ?
Give priests, temples, and mysteries, to make

The Promised Land

All other men and places seem profane,
And hide the Holy One—go *back* to Egypt?
When He yearns inward to their hearts, shall I
Say, “First prepare a solemn sacrifice?”
Ah, lonely must his life be who would lead
And will not lie. And since the truth is here—
Where God makes felt his presence—here, with
him [*placing his hand on the tables.*
Have I made laws for all time, of the truths
Men cannot live without, but are as beasts,
Each hating each—of duties that men owe
To God and man; their number, ten; and on
Two tables have I graved them, for to be
Foundation-stones of human love for ever.

And if he wills it, I will arise and lead
This people lifeward. If he wills it not,
What am I? What, but his will? Evermore
His hand, to work his will
Only and absolutely to the end.
So that, whate'er the life, pasturing flocks
Or nations, I may trace therein his mind
Writ in my work before me, and thereon
Gazing may ever dwell with him, in peace.

Yea, in thy [✠]thunder grant me strength, O God,
To have this peace, and hold it for my own
Against their daily striving—to be strong
To bear their weakness. Thou, who in cloud
and fire

ACT II. Sc. I. A Drama

Hast ever dwelt, I pray thee hide me now
Deep in thy mountain clefts, a moment's space
From all earth-weariness, alone with thee:
To live beyond to-day, far in the years
That Thou discernest down the vale of time—
Thy will, encircling mine, which I may touch
And comprehend some part of, and so live—
Thy Will, which, when I pass, shall be thy Will
To other worlds, and ages unexplored.

JOSH (*entering*). Pardon, my lord, if I should dis-
compose you,
Intruding thus abruptly, but it seems
There is some turmoil in the camp below.

MOSES. What say you, Joshua ? the people strive ?

JOSH. My lord, you will do well being present ; for
Some evil imp is in them. Ere I left
Our confines there was heard a hue and cry—
A this-way-that mad clattering of quick feet
And murmurous contagion ; then there came
A stream of open-mouthed sedition past me,
A pack of yapping curs, crying, " Where is
Moses ?
Where's Moses ? Give us bread. We perish,
Moses ! "

MOSES. Coward creatures ! Is there, then, so
clean a dearth ?

The Promised Land

JOSH. Why, no, my lord : I ween there's less of
want
In this than leading of rebellion.

MOSES. We will descend at once. Lead, Joshua.
How long have I been here ?

JOSH. A month of days.

MOSES. I do remember, for the moon was full
That night I left the camp—that day their ears
Seemed grosslier closed than ever—so last night.
I thank thee, noble friend, for all thy love
And loving providence of all my wants,
These many days ; wherein, still thanks to thee,
I have secured abstraction from the world,
Quiet and freedom from importunate men ;
A time to meditate ; wherein, with God
Alone—he only my companion—I
Have forethought all the future, and have writ
These tables for a law to Israel.

JOSH. The noise grows loud and louder—hark,
lord Moses !
There is war surely in the camp.

MOSES. Nay, nay,
The voice is not the voice of them that shout
For mastery, nor the voice of them that cry
For being overcome ; the noise I hear
Is theirs who sing.

ACT II. SC. I. A Drama

JOSH (*going to the edge.*) This rock will give us sight.
Ah! what a giddy leap! The lines of tents
Lie in the yellow bottom, like the scales
Upon a dusky fir-cone; farther down
The scanty green might be the bearing branch.
(*Aside*) And one of all those tents, I know not
which,
Within its slight circumference holds her
Who must be mine—for all her fanciful humours.

MOSES. Speak, my friend;
What is that crowd I see? My eyes are dim
With too much light of heaven; be thou mine.

JOSH. 'Tis true: a riotous crowd. The open court
And centre of the camp, which seems no more
Than just a man's own palm, is full of men—
A many-coloured throng—and in the midst
Again a space, and there an altar stands,
And over it a column. Look, my lord!
See you not something golden in the sun?

MOSES. I think it is an image. Who is that
Who stands, priest-like, presiding?

JOSH. 'Tis a priest!
He hath the gold and scarlet of sacrifice.

MOSES. O Egypt!

JOSH. Look, look, O heavens! the smoky incense,
see!

The Promised Land

It twines about the pillar and the god
Who sniffs the sacrifice, and now it soars
Erect through the calm sunlight. O and now,
Hear, Moses, for they sing. They dance again !

MOSES. Away ! and let us tarry here no more.
Lead, Joshua ! [Exeunt.

Curtain.

SCENE 2.

*Wild music of drums, cymbals, flutes, and horns.
Curtain rises showing Scene at foot of Sinai as
in Act I, Scene 4 : An Altar and Column with
Golden Calf upon it ; Aaron in ceremonial robes
before altar ; People dancing madly in circle
in scanty raiment and with dishevelled locks ;
Mixed crowd in background.*

SONG :—

*Hear us, Apis, hear us ! lest we die.
Out of our heart-yearning,
As at first we call, still call and cry ;
For the earth is burning,
And the heavens are bare, the heavens
Are fire ; they fall upon us ;
Hornéd One, O our desire,
Hast thou smitten us in ire,
Smile once more upon us.*

ACT II. Sc. 2. A Drama

(Moses and Joshua appear on a rock above, but unseen at first by the people. Thunder distantly rolling.)

*Hear us, O hear us ! As we whirl and dance,
Strangely thou reelest o'er us in the blue,
Thy gold front glitters strangely, and thy glance
Cleaves us with sudden madness through and
through.*

*Lo ! all our veins are bursting with desire,
Thirst and fierce lusting, such as thou dost love.
Leap through our pulses, lick us up like fire,
In and around us, under and above.*

*These are the signs, O Calfgod, of thy grace ;
Thou art not wroth ; nay, thou wilt hear us yet.
Thou wilt not hide the brightness of thy face,
But lead us forth by meadow and rivulet.
Let Moses and his God, 'mid these grim rocks,
Dwell, if they will, in everlasting drought ;
We will return, O Apis, to our flocks :
We will return, and thou shalt lead us out !*

MOSES. Away ! I will not hear this.

JOSH. Nay, but hark !

SONG :—

*Hear us, hear us, hear us, lest we die !
Madness is about us !*

The Promised Land

*Thou dost rock and reel athwart the sky,
As to flout and scout us.
Hear us, Apis, thou shalt, though our song
Shrill, till each throat is hoarse and eye-ball red,
Though limbs wax faint, and feet are wildly flung,
And all the sands are scarlet where they bled.*

*Hear us, hear us, hear us, lest we die !
Out of our heart-yearning,
As at first we call, still call and cry,
For the earth is burning,
And the heavens are bare, the heavens
Are fire ; they fall upon us ;
Hornéd God, our heart's desire,
Hast thou smitten us in ire,
Smile once more upon us.*

*[The thunderstorm, which has been
gathering during the song, bursts
with loud claps and lightning.
Dancing ceases. People look up in
fear and perceive MOSES and
JOSHUA on the rock.*

MOSES (*with majestic mien and in a loud, commanding voice*). What is this thing, ye people, that ye do ? . . . (*pause*)

What ! have I toiled and given my days for you, My days and nights—and my heart's dearest dreams,

To save you out of Egypt, and to make

ACT II. Sc. 2. A Drama

A brave free people of you? Have I now
Removed myself a brief while from your faces,
Simply to plead your cause before Jehovah,
And frame a chart and covenant of new life
For you, his people? And at once—my back
No sooner turned—than ye too turn your backs
On me and all my dreams, and your best hopes,
And hark you back to Egypt and her idols . . .
—Nay, 'tis enough. Take back your covenant,
These tables we have made and graven for you—
This draft of a new world that might have been—
This pledge between you and a God, as far
Beyond the gods of Egypt, as the round
Of heaven exceeds the compass of a tent.—
Take back your covenant, and go your ways!
I waste my days to serve your whims no more!

*[Throws the tables with a mighty crash
to the ground, and remains standing
a moment with arms outstretched.
The people, amazed, fall into groups;
with buzzings of recrimination
against each other.]*

MOSES (*sees AARON, and continues in a loud voice*)
And Aaron?—in the garb of Egypt's priests?
Aaron—can that be you? Come forth, come
forth!

*[AARON, timid and apologetic, comes to
the foot of the rock. There is
silence again in the crowd.]*

The Promised Land

MOSES. What, and have you too joined the throng
against me ?

AARON. Nay, lord. But for the moment—you
being gone
So long upon the mountain, and no tidings
Reaching us from you—I too deemed it best
To humour with some customary rites
The people's minds, and cause them to forget
Their present hardships.

MOSES (*sarcastic.*) Thought you too, perchance,
That Apis and Osiris and the rest
Might serve you better than the Lord Jehovah ?

AARON. Nay, Sir ; for well I know that Egypt's
gods
Rule only by the Nile ; nor can extend
Their domination here.

MOSES. And yet you did
Devise this Calf-god for the people's wor-
ship ?

AARON. Nay, lordly brother, be not overhasty.
I made it not ; it was not as you think.
You know the people's mischief ; it was they
Gave me the gold ; I cast it on the fire ;
And there came out a calf.

VOICES (*in derision.*) Came out a calf !

ACT II. Sc. 2. A Drama

MOSES. Go, Joshua,

And smite this mighty Calf-god to the ground.

[JOSHUA plunges down and overturns the altar and the column with the calf. Sensation and more recrimination among the people.]

Surely among you all some may be found
Who side with me and with the Lord of heaven
Against these evil doers !

VOICES (*some of the people raise their hands or their swords, and shout*) : Aye, we do ! we do !

MOSES. Come forth, come forth then—all that hold with me ;

And most, ye sons of Levi, oh, come forth !
To-day must bring an end to all this trifling ;
And those who will not forward to the Land
Of Promise and of Freedom under heaven,
Let them not back to Egypt, but lie here
For ever, for a warning. For thus saith
The Lord God, God of Israel : *if need be*
Take every man his sword, and go from gate
To gate throughout the camp ; slay, every man,
His brother, his companion, and his neighbour.

[*Renewed uproar, fighting, and Curtain.*]

The Promised Land

SCENE 3.

Interior of the Booth of HEBRON, which is hung with skins and furs for sale.

HEBRON and a Levite.

LEV. The scene was awful. As the people danced
And revelled naked round the altar, I,
Who feared some evil, saw upon the mount
Jehovah 'light in flame; and there uprose
A smoke as of a furnace, and a fire
Forking to heaven, as though the round of earth
Were made His altar; and, even while I watched,
A voice, a voice of trumpets, and thereafter
Quakings of earth, and then again a voice.
And all the people stood, and fear stared pale
Their speechless faces, while full in their midst
Strode Moses from the mountain; and he said,
" *What is this thing?* " But no one moved or
spake.

Then, when he saw the calf, and Aaron there,
His brother, raimented for sacrifice,
He threw his arms to heaven, and in anger
Hurled the two tables earthward; and they fell,
A thousand fragments, at the feet of Aaron,
And Joshua, in giant act of rage,
Smote the offending column, and it bowed
And fell, with the golden god, in heaps of ruins
And Moses, in a voice of mortal wrath,

ACT II. Sc. 3. A Drama

Cried, *Who is on the Lord's side? Unto me!*
And many turned to him; and most of us,
The sons of Levi. And he bade us smite . . .
And so we did. And there were slain that day
But little wanting of three thousand men.

HEB. I know, I know: it is an evil thing.

LEV. Why so?

HEB. There will be striving, after this:
And more and more; and less of peace, I know.
And strife brings but disquiet, and that brings
Little prosperity, and more and more
Of want and bad times both for man and beast.
(Enter RIGEL.)

LEV. Well, sir, I'll leave you now. You have, I
see,
More entertainment; and I wish you prosperous
days! *[Exit Levite.*

RIG. Good-day, Master Hebron! I have sought
you out on some pretext of business.

HEB. That suits me well. From what this son of
Levi tells me, I shall see little of that for many
a day.

RIG. Wrong! wrong! and my very point.

HEB. How so?

RIG. Indeed I will not say. This news is too rare

The Promised Land

a merchandise for common gift ; we must make a bargain of it. Come, my good Hebron, promise me what I shall afterwards ask, and you shall know all.

HEB. Nay, nay, you are too merry. I cannot tell what you will ask. You may ask the disgorgement of the good fortune that you bring, and that were no bargain. But you know me, Rigel, and if you have wool, or even moss, for my nest, I will never forget.

RIG. I do know you, good heart, and therefore hear—

After the late exasperations, Moses, whose anger never endures more than a day, fell into some flatness of dejection—doubtless foreboding in the frivolity of the people the ruin of all his purposes. And Aaron, with ready wit seizing the moment, showed in this bent of the popular mind, not his own apology merely, but his necessity and justification ; and thus re-admitted himself into his brother's confidence. But not only so. For he pleaded his case with such skill that he convinced Moses—of what most of us long ago perceived—that the people cannot live and breathe in his attenuated religion, but must have something that they can see and touch—temples and incense, altars and a priesthood, as in Egypt. And Moses, to choose the lesser of two evils,

ACT II. Sc. 3. A Drama

and avoid the calf, will bend to the argument of Aaron (for this I heard from Korah, who himself heard it from Aaron), and will institute a temple and special priesthood to Jehovah; the temple and its offices to be after the Egyptian fashion, yet with less circumstance of idolatry and superstition, and Aaron himself to be high priest.

HEB. This is most notable, and plausible too, I think. Withal you wound my generous attention; for this is rather a matter of public wealth than of private good fortune.

RIG. You have no hint, then? What, your ancient heart is losing its cunning? Yet the conclusion presses. For us outcasts, a temple is but a tabernacle; a tabernacle is (is it not so?) a large tent; and a tent——

HEB. O fanciful heart!—is thatched with skins.

RIG. Rams', goats', and badgers'! What desire you more?

HEB. I have a doubt. If this is made a tax?

RIG. Not so: 'twill be an offering; the people Will give—and buy of you.

HEB. Most favourable Aaron! And you say This is yet quiet? there is time to store And stuff my secret coffers, till they burst In pride of future profit?

The Promised Land

RIG. It is known
To one or two at most ; and if my suit
Meets your acceptance, it shall so remain.

HEB. O tender-hearted Rigel, how I love you.

RIG. Not more than I your daughter.

HEB. What, my Zillah ?

RIG. You have a ready talent.

HEB. My Zillah ! now indeed you touch me nearly.

RIG. Most nearly would I, being your son.

HEB. Well, well,
I had not thought of this.

RIG. Be sure, old man,
That with all dues of form and circumstance
I am prepared for purchase. You shall want,
Though I'm not rich, no customary dole
Of sheep or cattle, or their worth in silver ;
And what I've told you, let that be as nought ;
I still shall count it pride to be your son.

HEB. You flatter me—myself, my hopes, my
daughter.

I love you well already ; and ere long
Shall love you better. You have in my head
Hatched a delicious fever ; for the nonce
I rave of tabernacles, rams, and badgers.

ACT II. Sc. 3. A Drama

Give me a day or two, and we will talk
This matter out more calmly ; now, the place
And pressure of the hour forbids us more.

RIG. Good-day, then, Master Hebron ; for I see
This is no private opportunity.
But let delay be brief, for still I fear.
Holding time's loss too cheap, to lose what's dear.

Enter JOSHUA.

HEB. Farewell, sir, till to-morrow !

RIG. So. Farewell ! *[Exit.*

HEB. (*aside*) Now, who is this ? I should, yet
do not, know him.

JOSH. I come, good sir, to treat with you on
themes

Not intimate to your trade, yet to your heart
(If you will hear me) of no little moment.

HEB. Your servant bids you speak.

JOSH. Because my heart
Is in this matter too, I cannot speak
Except most plainly : sir, I love your daughter,
And in most honourable bonds of love
Would make her mine—to be my very wife.

HEB. This is soon asked and answered." 'Tis a suit
Incapable of acceptance. Sir, my child
Is pledged elsewhere, nor can be given by me—
She's mine no longer.

The Promised Land

JOSH. What is this? Who, say you?

HEB. O a most favourable gentleman,
Well got and worthy of her hand, be sure;
Indeed she loves him dearly.

JOSH. Now you lie!
Old man, you would deceive me.

HEB. Ho! young slip,
This is plain insolence, and such as youth
Condemns itself in using.

JOSH. Who is he—
Tell me, old man, who dares to come between . . .

HEB. (*taking him up*) To come between? . . .
And who, pray, gave you leave
To address my child at all, or claim a place
In her affections?

JOSH. I will not believe
Her heart is given—though 'tis like enough
You may have given her hand.

HEB. Think what you will; but pray do not
suppose,
I to a frantic stranger will detail
The dear relations of my daughter's love.
Suffice it that her unconcealed desire
Suits with my will.

JOSH. You lie, old badger-pate!

HEB. Ho now! and who are you,
To insult and beard an old man, by the door

ACT II. SC. 3. **A Drama**

Of his own tent? Your name?

JOSH. 'Tis Joshua.

You know me? speak no more.

HEB. (*changing tone*) What, good my lord,

Our noble and incomparable captain?

(*Aside*) And rich despoiler of proud Amalek.

(*To JOSHUA*) Let, now, your servant find grace
in your eyes ;

For age comes like a veil and folds a man
Out of the world, and makes his senses dim.
My lord, this matter will admit of words.

JOSH. (*angrily*) No more, no more. We have
had words enough.

HEB. What hinders, then?

JOSH. No more, enough, enough.
I wish you now farewell. [*Exit.*

HEB. Farewell, my lord!
This is a foolish matter. Here I've lost
The confidence of fortune, marring thus
Her most assured promise. 'Tis a proud
And passionate young man. But what a day!
A festival of fortune! I may yet
Reason it with him: Rigel, it is true,
Has ta'en my promise; and, for private love,
I would he were my son; but prudence oft
Makes private liking luxury, and so
Against our inclination bids us go. [*Exit.*

Curtain.

ACT III

SCENE I.

*Kadesh, a rocky Valley. The Camp of Israel—
A Public Place.*

RIGEL *alone.*

RIG. A most perfidious old man! May he eat no more of fish and cucumbers, or see an onion again for ever, but starve on manna till he is mummied! For I might have gone to Egypt with those wise ones who left us at Sinai, and still have returned in time to be the plaything of his postponements. Since his first promise there has been a matter of at least ten moons, and as many plagues of quails. Yet, now, the contract's made and signed, the dowry paid, the notaries satisfied. So she is mine, and in a few days will to my tent by her father be rendered. She's mine—even though for my property in her I seem to lose hold over myself. For I marvel how I change. My mind swings like a gate, this way and that, as she passes through it; and if little Zillah were a Zipporah I should change

ACT III. Sc. 1. A Drama

my skin and have thick lips even while the Z yet served for either name. Zillah loves Miriam; and now that Miriam consorts with Korah's party, and there is a coolness twixt her and Moses—that doubtless is the reason why I too consort with Korah—who, even now, if I mistake not, comes this way with his wary Reubenite, Dathan.

Enter KORAH and DATHAN.

Good-morrow, masters!

KOR. Most well met, good Rigel. Since last I saw you, many things have happened which make your knowledge and co-operation needful, and which a few words will furnish you withal.

RIG. Speak on, my lord.

KOR. Briefly then. Since his discomfiture, our lordly Aaron is more than ever enviously-minded against his brother Moses; but secretly because, having lost the people's confidence, he has now no public footing of his own.

RIG. And the conduct of this matter, as well as the final glory, will rest with Korah.

KOR. You flatter me. But, to continue. It has been easy, then, to induce Aaron to gain the ear of his sister Miriam; which he has done to

The Promised Land

such purpose that she, knowing nothing of our real purposes, sees in our rebellious preparation only a just protest against the pride of Moses. Her defection, for she is the delight of the people, draws with it a most numerous following, and thus we now, this way and that, may number full two hundred and fifty chief men of the congregation, men of weight and instance, besides the rabble multitude. With this authority success is sure. Yet, to add certainty to certainty, I have (and this is for your private ear only) persuaded Aaron, whose will is now mine, to stand up in public audience, with his sister Miriam, and tax Moses to his face. The openness of the procedure commends itself to Miriam's generous temper, but it is certain that it will inflame Moses, and make that rupture between him and his sister final and undisguised, which till now has been secret and medicable. Meanwhile it will incense the people, and give us authority and excuse for a decisive blow.

RIG. A most honourable and ingenious plot.

DATH. May we, then, count you in it ? and will you hold your hand in readiness to strike at any moment for us ? Success is something to be organized. If you and others will, for the hour, accept the leading of my lord Korah and his council, we shall do memorable things.

ACT III. SC. I. A Drama

KOR. Rigel is ours, I know.

RIG. I am scarcely myself, my lord ; but that is, doubtless, that I am yours. Yet I would know what is our end in this. Without Moses we shall be without a head, and that is an end without an end.

DATH. Most true. We must have a head. Our end is liberty, but liberty must have a head.

RIG. That will be the end of liberty.

KOR. Well, good-day, sir, we must be moving. We shall count upon you. And whoever has deserved best of us shall be our head, be it you or I.

[Exeunt KORAH and DATHAN.]

RIG. You, doubtless, desert or no desert. I do not think I can do better than cast in with these. Korah is a man of wit ; and with his easy frankness has fooled Aaron as giddy as a dry leaf in the breath of the East. Aaron is lost, blotted out, has become the scorn of the people, and the toy of Korah's ambition, and his only friend is the brother whom he has betrayed. Korah will win. His cause is well enough ; and that must qualify his treachery.

[Exit.]

The Promised Land

SCENE 2.

Without the Tent of MIRIAM.

HUR and MIRIAM.

HUR. O you do wrong your brother, Miriam !
This will attain your honour to all time,
Even that a sister from so noble a brother
Should warp her natural affection.

MIR. In this I suffer, and must suffer, alas !
One sorrow twice : in separation once,
And once again in all men's misconception.
Yet do I count this (though the public voice,
Denying approval, makes the conscience even
Tremble as guilty) nought, compared with that.
It is a joyless task I have before me ;
Yet, having entered on it, all your words
And the contempt of all men to all time
Shall not dissuade me.

HUR. You are led in this,
Believe me, by a false heart, and by that
Which can betray its brother.

MIR. If you point
Me in this doubtful speech, then I am dumb ;
For that you wound my heart too deep for words.
If Aaron, then I say you basely slander ;
For Aaron's heart in all this is as mine,

ACT III. Sc. 2. A Drama

And true to Moses ; for the truest truth
Lies not in any act or outward form
Of words, but in the heart that wills no evil.
And we toward Moses entertain (God knows)
No mean or spiteful humour ; but because
He, through some negligence (oft noticeable
In guileless hearts) of popular report,
Or by some hard core of imperiousness,
Which knits the roundure of rich, fruitful natures,
Has hurt the people and so jeoparded
The general well-being, therefore we,
And therefore only, will withstand him now.

HUR. Know, then, that ye withstand God's
chosen one.

MIR. God hath not chosen Moses, but to make
Us all his favoured people ; therefore now
Moses is no more blameless, in that he
Usurps the honourable claim of all,
Will suffer no approach of dignity,
Nor hear a voice of counsel ; but will stand
A Pharaoh o'er us, yet to thrust us down
To thralldom worse than Egypt's.

HUR. God by him
Leads to the land of promise : lift a hand,
And it is sacrilege.

MIR. Go ! have you not
A heart of indignation in you ? Go,

The Promised Land

Grovel at Moses' feet, then : as I would—
But will not.

HUR. Out, out ! treachery peeps through
The thin veil of your wrath. Be sure that I
To forewarn Moses will not fail. Farewell !

[Exit.]

MIR. O, bitter, bitter day ! Now have I seen
The end of all our wanderings, and Egypt
Triumphing gloriously o'er us ! Come,
I have a mind to die ; for I have put
War in the tender chambers of my heart,
And steeled myself to action over it.
I wound, and am the wounded ; and I strike,
Through Moses, my life's midriff. Let me die !
For discord is drawn downward like a knife,
Dividing all this people : factious rage
And wretched spites devour us, and revolt
Raises its monstrous misshape in our midst.
And I (they say) because my brother's love
Is closer to me than the bond of life,
Must bear the word which from these lips, alas !
Will wound him most, and so most hopefully
Work healing of our sickness. I must live,
Yet die through all of life, because of love.

Enter ZILLAH.

What, Zillah ?

ZIL. O dear lady, I am sold

ACT III. Sc. 2. A Drama

As so much rubbish, bargained for with dross,
Bartered for money, marketed like sheep!
Death were not worse than this is. O but you
May save me!

MIR. Speak, and yet be calm, my child:
You word it like a wayside soothsayer
In autumn 'mid the gleaners and fat sheaves,
Professing to read fortunes and rule fate,
Who talks and yet tells nothing.

ZIL. I am sold
In marriage, by my father, to a man
I will not look on, so he does offend
My natural eye.

MIR. Why, that is hard indeed.
Your father doubts your wish walks with his will,
Else had he first forewarned you.

ZIL. Why, I think
My father cares no tittle for his child,
But places her affection where his own
Advantage prompts—and thinks no more about
it.

Oh, it is cruel! I will ne'er believe
There's any root of grace in man, if thus
The dear relation of a daughter's love
Counts less than all contempt. O I am counted,
Paid for with money! and it recks not now
To rend my father's heart of pity; he,

The Promised Land

If he hath pity, hath no power ; for I
Am Rigel's, am his slave, his beast, his body,
And in imagination's dread foreboding
Am lapped already in his loathed embrace.

MIR. Stand, Zillah, you shall live. This shall not
be ;

For woman was not always merchandise,
Nor shall be so for ever. I can see
This kills your very soul. I recollect
That there was one (latterly to our sight
Somewhat a stranger) who unto your thoughts,
If I mistake not, was more dear than many.

ZIL. Ah, surely never ! Or so long ago
It seems a never : do not speak of this.
For so, dear lady, do you pluck a hope
Out of my heart to make my eyes behold
How vain a thing it is. And if I lose
All hope, I am a soulless thing—a thing
To buy and sell, and justly sell for money.
But why delay ? You, dearest Miriam,
Can, so you will it, save me.

MIR. Doubt it not :
I will, past fate and fortune.

ZIL. 'Tis but this,
To cast the matter at the feet of Moses—
You are his sister, he will hear you.

ACT III. Sc. 3. A Drama

MIR. (*pained*) Ah!

ZIL. And he is judge and can do what he will.

MIR. Ah! you have hurt me—let us go.

ZIL. My lady?

MIR. Enough. Best con this o'er in quiet—come.
[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE 3.

A Public Place, same as Act III, Scene. 1.

Two Israelites.

1ST ISR. I saw it all. The fire in Moses' face
Flashed when they touched on Zipporah.

2ND ISR. What's that?
Spoke they of Zipporah? Why then I trust
They tongued it sharply; for it is a shame
That Moses, having made it matter of death
For common lust to trespass on the pastures
Of other tribes, should still permit himself
To keep this Ethiop cow; but 'tis a piece
With other his presumption. So you saw?
Well, tell me all in order.

1ST. ISR. You must know,
'Twas at the time of incense, and the cloud
Still lingered by the tabernacle door,

The Promised Land

When Aaron and his sister Miriam—
For Moses did the sacrifice that day,
Usurping Aaron's office—boldly stood
Forth from the multitude, for it was many,
And questioned Moses, saying, "Hath the Lord
Indeed spoke only unto men by Moses?
Hath he not spoke by us too?" Then they
touched,
As I have said, on Zipporah, and he
Flamed at this last with wrathful eyes, and said,
"Come up, now, hither." And the three came
out
And stood before the temple; and he spake,
And bade them mark, in many mighty words
Whose meaning I can give you, how that God
Indeed had chosen him to single honour
In the high task of our deliverance,
By many signs and portents; and had spoke
Face to face with him, as unto no man
Before or after. And his fiery wrath
Wrought a great silence on the multitude;
Nor Aaron nor his sister spake a word,
But were ash-pale, and shrank, as those who see
The dun-red sandstorm darken all the sky;
And in that moment the white altar-cloud
Was ended, and went up, as though Jehovah
Removed himself in wrath. And Moses turned
And passed beneath the cherubs of the cornice
Into the Holy Place, and Miriam

ACT III. Sc. 3. A Drama

And Aaron and the multitude went down,
Some murmuring, but mostly very silent.

2ND ISR. 'Tis likely, after all, that Moses is
Justly approvable in this.

1ST ISR. 'Tis said
That Miriam is smote with leprosy,
And lies without the camp. If this be true,
Moses of divine favour is assured.

2ND ISR. Well, I shall weigh and balance. There
will be
Far more and solider matter of strife ere long,
Whose bias will be best known in the act.

1ST ISR. Well, I shall be for Moses. For I see
His presence is an empire, and his breath,
Like the clear north wind winging up the Nile,
Blows wavering sails in flocks against the stream.
Whenever the encounter, doubt it not,
Moses prevails.

2ND ISR. Well, we shall see. Meanwhile
We need not less be friends. These feuds are
stuff
For politicians, not for men like us.

[Exeunt.]

The Promised Land

SCENE 4.

Interior of MOSES' Tent.

MOSES *alone.*

MOSES. Who leads a people, let him learn that love
And smiles and daily music of dear lips,
And' children's laughter, yea, and friendship's
hand,
Are not for him. Let others have joy thereof.
All, all are gone. The day of loneliness
Lengthens before me now, down to the grave.
God strikes his mountain-summits, gives them
light,
But scars their sides with terror ; so I turn
And stand aloof to all time for a sign.
What, Miriam, couldst thou, too, think a lie ?
And lend thy rare lips to the rabble breath
For such unworthy ending of our love ?
Thou needest so no more ; for even now,
Far hence, her face set homeward to her kin,
Zipporah leaves me wifeless. Peradventure
Thine was a just rebuke. And I will ne'er
On the least peradventure of a wrong
Build any dear advantage ; lest men say,
“ This man regards his own good, let us wrest
The rod of power from him.” I must die
That these may live and people a new land.—
If Mirlam were near me it were well,

ACT III. Sc. 4. A Drama

And I were worthier master of my mind.
Come, I will warn her, Zipporah is gone ;
No word more, for the thought is like a worm.
[MOSES *writes.*

Enter JOSHUA.

JOSH. My lord, your brother Aaron waits without.

MOSES. You come in time, my friend, to do me this
Most gentle favour : pray you, give these words
Unto the eye of Miriam, my sister.
My love and near relation to you must
Commend this service to your hands alone.
[*Gives tablet.*

JOSH. My lord, I am but yours.

MOSES. Let Aaron enter.
[*Exit* JOSHUA.

Enter AARON, and throws himself at the feet of
MOSES.

AARON. My lord and brother, I crave and pray for
pardon !
I come not from, but on behalf of her
Who shared this deed with me. Alas ! I pray,
Lay not this sin upon us that we dared
Rebuke God's chosen witness. Let her not
Be as one dead, whose flesh is half consumed
Ere he is born !

The Promised Land

MOSES. What ? Hath God lifted up
His arm on Miriam ? Doth the leper spot
Blotch all her beauty ? Rise, I pray, my
brother ;
I have no heart against you, for we are
Twin sufferers in our sister : I will turn
And pray the Eternal for her. He will heal.
Let us speak no more of the past, 'tis over.

AARON. My princely brother !

MOSES. Go to Miriam,
Take two young birds, the scarlet and the hyssop,
According to the law which was appointed,
And cleanse her that she live. Let her remain
Seven days without the camp, nor speak to man
Or womankind : two laws there shall not be,—
One for the many, and one for Moses' sister.
Thereafter will we see her ; may it be soon.
Farewell, my brother !

AARON. Brother, dear, farewell !
Be sure I will, and without fail, fulfil
The law of Moses. [Exit.

MOSES. The law of Moses ! what a word is that
To mark for always this queer cross and medley
'Twixt sense and superstition, which the times
With all their contrarities have forced
On my adoption ! Well, what must be, must.

Act III. Sc. 4. A Drama

Enter HUR.

HUR. My lord, a moment from your reverie.

MOSES. What is it, my lord Hur? Some angry
thought
Convulses to its image all your features.

HUR. Anger forbids me speak what anger bids.
Intolerable treachery, dear lord.
Lies close around you : Korah——

MOSES. Ay, I know ;
Korah, in undisguiséd enmity,
Speaks, hears but evil of me. Yet I will
Lift not a finger on him, till his act
Openly courts conviction.

HUR. 'Tis not this,
But worse confusion I must warn you of ;
For Aaron, your own brother sorts with Korah
And joins the brood against you. Aye, and even
Miriam, my wife, your sister, does incline
To cast her influence with them.

MOSES. Can it be
That metal so debased is found in man ?

HUR. Or woman. O my lord, account this not
A bastard birth of fancy ! Fear for you,
Now breaking silence, doth but bring to light
The long conception of my mind. I've marked,

The Promised Land

Watched, weighed, and wondered: Aaron's
heart is given
To Korah's cause; and Miriam—perchance
By very reason of her singleness
Of heart, which sees no craftiness in others—
Fastens her faith on Aaron: all are gone.
Nor do they cease to sow dissent abroad,
But court the public favour, and embitter
All hearts against you.

MOSES.

Miriam! O how

This second wound seems opened in my soul
Where there can be no healing! For the first
Closed not so kindly or without a scar,
But this has time to touch me to the quick.
No more: no more I'll trust
Even the soft compunctions of my own
Heart, seeing I cannot thine—thine, Miriam.
Henceforth the way lies straight before me. Fear,
With sweet affection, is removed afar.
Nought now can warp my purpose. What?
and Aaron?
Though weak, I deemed him worthy trust. Away!
Let him remain with Korah, and be true
At least to one man. Tell me, Hur, how stands
The people's loyalty?

HUR.

There will be war,

War in our midst, my lord. Over two hundred

ACT III. Sc. 4. A Drama

Of high distinction are devised with Korah ;
A rabble follows them. There will be war.

MOSES. Go you and Joshua among the people,
Sound their affection, call our friends together,
Prepare some arms, and be in readiness.
We will not nap, yet will we shed no blood
Till we have warrant from our enemies.

HUR. Doubt not, my lord, our utmost will we do,
And with good issue. *[Exit.*

MOSES. I will live and not
Die till I see that land, and Israel
Standing among the cornstacks and the vines.

Curtain.

ACT IV

SCENE I.

Before MIRIAM'S Tent.

MIRIAM, *her leprosy having departed, and* JOSHUA.

JOSH. Farewell, my lady! and I will forthwith
Inform lord Moses of your health regained,
And happily complete recovery.

MIR. (*with tablet*) Did my brother
Give you no other matter for my ear
Than these few words?

JOSH. None, lady.

MIR. Then, perchance,
I may expect his presence, always welcome,
And now, despite our lamentable estrangement,
Dearer than ever to me.

JOSH. (*aside*) O false, false!

(*To MIRIAM*) My lady, the late discords in the
camp
Bring much anxiety upon your brother,

ACT IV. Sc. 1. A Drama

And cares he cannot shift on other shoulders,
And sorrows which his loneliness alone
Makes doubly grievous ; knowing this, you know
The answer I would give you, without words

MIR. Farewell, then.

JOSH. Peace be with you—if it may.

[Exit

MIR. The breach grows wider, and therewith the
hurt

Gapes inward past all healing. These are words
Sharper than thorns within a thirsty wound.
Look, " Zipporah "—no other touch than this—
" Zipporah is departed : " no reproach,
No word of sharpness, but this one sad line
Which lengthens out before me into fire.
I have thrust forth a robber-hand : 'tis I
Have spoiled the nest, rooted it from its hold,
And made the tender twin-delight of love
Fly from the world for ever ! Woe is me,
That I had madness to devise, or heart
To do this deed of iron ! O who says
Moses is proud, let him come forth and prove it !
No longer shall men slander ; I will take
This little brief, and go about the camp,
And with this one line plead more eloquence
Than Aaron with an army of fair words.
Come, Aaron too shall know it : this may yet,

The Promised Land

E'en though much pain, work unexpected peace,
And pour balm in the wounds of Israel.

Enter Attendant.

ATT. My lady, the lord Aaron and lord Korah
Linger without, and will await your leisure.

MIR. I will give audience here ; go, bid them enter.

[Exit Attendant.]

'Tis well : this meeting shall have other issue
Than that for which we planned it.

Enter AARON and KORAH.

Enter, sirs.

AARON. Peace be upon you, sister Miriam !

KOR. My lady, the whole camp, with glad consent
Of song and dance, doth welcome your return.
We, too, do mix our voices.

AARON. Miriam,
We have great deeds before us, and do come
To make you partner of them.

KOR. We do seek
The polestar of our purpose and the staff
Of our prosperity.

MIR. Speak out, my lords.

AARON. All works the way of fortune. Miriam,

ACT IV. Sc. 1. A Drama

Friend you with us, and we shall win from fate.
Your favour with the people will so pile
The weights upon our scale, that we shall count
As lead to feathers 'gainst the force of Moses,
We'll carry all before us, and will buy,
Without bloodshed, the boon of liberty.

MIR. Bloodshed! Who argues that?

KOR. Why, none, my lady,
As long as you, allying us to peace,
With your fair angel-face do turn the edge
Of bloody opposition.

MIR. Ah, indeed,
How are ye strangers to my brother's heart?
Ye know it not at all. In it are depths
Whose calm ye cannot fathom. Read and learn:
Let this disarm you. [*Gives the writing.*]

KOR. (*reads and shows to AARON*) This? Why,
'tis a nothing!

AARON. A pretext and a show of deference!

KOR. A private matter, and for private ends!
Why should this move us? Zipporah!

MIR. My lords!

KOR. My lady, we have graver argument—
Such as must waive formality—before us.

The Promised Land

Leave we this now. Time presses, and our
troops,

Such, namely, as our faction draws together,
Though secret now in their tents, stand on the
word

Of instant action. Blow we this on the wind,
And we shall have an army.

MIR. Who says this ?

KOR. The moments spur to action. We have
fanned

A spark of hot sedition : now it flames
And runs in wildfire through the camp. To-day
Serves us. To-morrow is too late.

MIR. Lord Korah,
Stand from me : you have tricked me !

KOR. Nay, I swear :
Because I plead for peace I do adjure you,
Stand with us now. See, here are roaring lions
Ravening for prey, and raging like the sea ;
And none can tame them, noble Miriam,
Save one—who will not ? Will she see the mob
Make ruin of her brother ? She alone,
Whose presence, like a flag, makes all men one,
Smooths out the lion's mane, makes smile the sea.

MIR. Go from me ! I abhor you hence for ever.

KOR. (*aside*) Woman—damned, faithless woman !

ACT IV. SC. I. A Drama

(To MIRIAM) Hear me then.

Open your eyes and know well what you do.
I cannot hold this people: it is mad;
And mad for Moses. You—forget not—first
Cried out to heaven against him; you, forsooth,
Started the rolling stone of discontent
Which brings the mountain of men's spite upon
him.

Will you stand off now, plant yourself aloof,
So better to be witness of the ruin
Yourself have wrought? Forgive me, fairest
lady,
I cannot round my lips to softer words,
And would not wound with sharp ones.

MIR. Oh, the wound
Is deeper than all words! Your lips, my lord,
Sheathe but a sorry sword. A leaden knife
Is sharper than a lying tongue. Enough;
No more of this. Away! what I have done
I will undo, or expiate in death.

KOR. Undo you cannot. What is done is done:
Heaven's stars do stand not farther out of reach
To fix or to unfix them. Rather—more
Make perfect your first purpose, and complete
This incomplete commencement. Come with us.
'Tis headstrong strife and bloody rage you fear—
The fruit of opposition,—make us one,
Make opposition impotent, you make

The Promised Land

Our sword-blades bloodless. Where the brook
descends

To battle with the ocean, there is seen
An angry gnashing of white teeth, nathless
The tide (so they of Egypt say, the wise)
Rolls round the fretful world without a wave,
Because the moon makes all its waters one—
Be thou our Moon; shine on us unto peace.

MIR. Speak, Aaron.

AARON. Sister, I have nought to say,
You did compact with Korah, wherefore, then,
Deny your plight?—more, Moses is unmanned,
Forsaken, lost, you cannot friend him now.

MIR. God free me from you! Nay, I snatch
myself.

For had I sworn my soul yours before heaven,
And bound my faith by everything on earth,
In heaven, and over heaven, I would yet
Strike through that deed, and cancel so all claim
Even to the meanest gift of man or God—
Discovenant my life-blood, to be free.
God shall not scorn you traitors, but your souls
Shall wither from his face for very fear.

[Exit.]

KOR. That was a fool's speech, Aaron; you have
lost

The lodestar of our fortune.

ACT IV. Sc. 1. A Drama

AARON. Softly, sir ;
'Tis most congenial to the commonest minds
To fasten blame where they should own defect.

KOR. We both are cowards, and fools too, forsooth.
To count upon a woman

AARON. Without her
I misdoubt all our ends.

KOR. And you are one
To whine what's done and undone. Courage !
Hark !

[Uproar without.

The time is instant on us. To the front !

AARON. Count not on me—this matter is not mine.

KOR. Villain ! I'll brand you traitor before Moses,
And bear the pains of twenty deaths to do it,
Ere you shall hide your falsehood in his faith.

AARON. One can forestall another. Fare you well !
[Exit.

KOR. Accursèd hound ! Away ! Where's Dathan ?
Come,
Korah, be fearless ; you have friends enough.

[Renewed uproar.

I come, I come. *[Exit.*

The Promised Land

SCENE 2

A space before the Tabernacle. Early morning.

RIGEL and an Israelite.

RIG. Well, I must on.

ISR. One word more. Did the crowd
Give her speech audience ?

RIG. Why, my friend, they stood
As touched to marble—each in act to move,
Yet motionless with wonder. For her words
Were like a challenge, and each several man
Received it to himself. They could not stir.

ISR. Yet were they bent (if that is true I hear)
On violence to Moses. Can a mob
So easily be mastered ?

RIG. Miriam
Strikes with her words the very hearts of men,
And wakes them up to manhood, swaying them
Where all their wills are one. They would have
struck,
But were stone still. Then she (as one who
rules)
Bade them meet Moses solemnly this day,
Before the temple, to confer with him.
And so they parted.

ISR. And you range with Korah ?

ACT IV. Sc. 2. A Drama

RIG. I do.

ISR. With all this eloquence to prove
How traitorous his heart is ?

RIG. What is that ?
Some must befriend this Korah, else there were
None honour left for Moses in his fall.
Come, these are matters that affect me not,
Except but indirectly. Let us go. [*Exeunt.*]

Enter MIRIAM and ZILLAH. Crowd slowly assembles to witness the Judgment between MOSES and KORAH, and ranges itself according to Party.

MIR. Great God, who guidest all the host of heaven,
Redeem this day from evil ; look, and lend
Peace to this stricken people from thy cloud !
Do with me what Thou wilt ; take this stained life
And pour it out like water on the earth,
To win the grace of heaven : grant but this,
No harm be hap to Moses. Not of him
Ask I the precious balm of pardon—sweet,
Too sweet to assuage my sorrow—not a life
Of menial service were the price of this.
Enough that coldly he encounters me—
So would I have it—and that yesterday,
Not without danger, I did beard the mob,
Faced his mad foes, and gained a day's delay,
Postponing arms to public argument.

The Promised Land

ZIL. Like one inspired, and with command, you spoke :

Rude man was wrought to mute astonishment.

MIR. O child, henceforth our paths must go apart !
Who's this ? your father ?

Enter HEBRON *and* RIGEL.

Stay, how stands that matter ?

ZIL. Incapable of furtherance, dear lady—
Speak, think no more of 't. You have grief
enough
To hold both eyes in fee. And, in good faith,
I am content so.

MIR. Fare you well, then, sweet !
I'll to my tent, with penitent tears to pray
The peaceful issue of this evil day. [*Exit.*

HEB. (*to* ZILLAH) Come, child, look cheerfully.
Here is your husband.

Commend you two together. Good, my friend,
The wedding shall be shortly ; this must be
Your last farewell. Her evil sprites are fled,
And she comes forth to greet you from her cloud
(Which late she wore so closely) like the sun.
See ! now she shines upon you. 'Tis a girl
You'll love right tenderly. 'Tis a good girl.

ZIL. Ah me ! this goodness is a fell disease.

ACT IV. Sc. 2. A Drama

RIG. Sweet coz, your cruel frowns are changed
away
For winning smiles.

ZIL. Sir, I am as I was.
'Tis you are changed.

RIG. Nay, nay; that little flag
Love hangs upon your cheek makes change high
treason,
And falsehood civil war against myself.

ZIL. You are a friend of Korah.

RIG. What is that?

ZIL. 'Tis to be arm-in-arm with falsehood. Sir,
You are a merry quibbler.

RIG. Come, methinks
You fancy words.

ZIL. (*hotly*) Unwarrantable man!
Why do you friend with cowards, and make
cause
With one who'd perjure himself into power?

RIG. My pretty child, what a white heat is this!
Methinks we once were one mind in this matter,
And now the world's gone mad on't.

ZIL. Tell me, then,
Has Moses wronged you? has he wronged this
people,

The Promised Land

Dealt falsely, or forsaken it in need?—
But Korah fools you, and befouls his name
With treacherous breath, that ye may murder
truth,
Make falsehood king, and sell your freedom to
him.

RIG. Nay, nay; there's not much credit in this
tale;
And 'tis too weighty matter for our loves:
Let us use love's own themes.

ZIL. My love is dead.
Speak loud or low you will not wake her more.
[Flourish of trumpets.]

HEB. Stand aside, children! Ho, there; ay, and
there!
Make room for Moses and his men-at-arms!

RIG. To stand with Korah I am deeply sworn.
[To ZILLAH] I must begone.

ZIL. Ay, sir, of course you must.
Go, do not dally; get you to your mate.
What, is the word injurious? Come, sir, go!
[Exit.]

RIG. A feather am I, flying on her breath;
She blows me with a word. Why, Moses, Korah,
What are their foolish rivalries to me?
But, though I worship neither man nor God,

ACT IV. Sc. 2. A Drama

She touches but my shoulder and I follow,
Faithful, to any fate. How am I changed
I was a common, gross, unleavened man,
Full of unshapely, ill-digested thoughts,
Such as I now can think no more. Love comes,
Searches the lump through, tries with fierce assay
The good and evil, burns away the false,
And like a piercing flame fuses together
All passions into one. The thought of her
Is vital now in every argument
And act that I am lord of. Well I know
A traitor is this Korah; and, though he
And his designs are all indifferent to me,
Her image in my heart doth no more brook
Contamination of his treachery,
But bids it thence—and with authority.
How now?— [Flourish of trumpets.

*Enter MOSES, attended by HUR, JOSHUA, and others,
and takes his station in front of the Tabernacle.*

MOSES. Blow, challenge back the tempest with
your blast!

And wake these rocky caverns till they roar
Discordant music round us. I will call
Heaven and earth to witness us this day.
Lo! the sun rises; blow a solemn blast,
And let the camp assemble.

*Enter KORAH, DATHAN, and Elders of the Con-
gregation, and take their place opposite MOSES.*

The Promised Land

AARON, in his robes, is seen standing in the entrance of the Tabernacle, from which a cloud of incense ascends continually.

Are all men here?—O sons of Israel,
Because in all things I have only sought
How most to harm you ; since (so these maintain)
Now many months I neither sleep by night
Nor slacken care by day, bethinking me
How best to compass your destruction ;
Hear them I pray : for this you're called : hear
them.

And let no ancient love or tenderness
Warp judgment in my favour ; give their words
The utmost of your hearing. Speak, my lords !

KOR. I am not slow to speak ; nor, Israel,
Dost thou, I wot, want argument to hear.
We all have heard this Moses. Many times
Hath he, with feints and fair false promises,
Cajoled our judgment and inveigled us
Farther into this desert—for what end ?
If not to sell us, when we're faint with famine
And far from rescue, to some swarthy tribe
Wherewith he holds foul commerce. But of that
We'll treat hereafter. Now, befits me best
To dip a cupful for you from this ocean.
You all remember how he spake to us
Under the mountain walls of Sinai—
Declared us equal, and, in God's high name,

ACT IV. Sc. 2. A Drama

Holy unto His service ? Well, my friends,
Why stand we here without ? What ! hath he
thrust you—

Hath he, and Aaron, like the priests of Egypt,
Rejected you for rabble, thrust you forth
Into contemptuous distance, counting you
As beasts before them ? Answer me, lord Moses,
Since this whole people is holy, all of them,
And the Lord is among them, why do ye
Lift yourselves up above the Lord's elected ?
Ye take too much upon you. O my friends,
Ye suffer long ; but see ye not the end ?
The sons of Reuben dwell within their tents,
Disdaining to regard a traitor's summons—
A traitor, mark you, that is what they say :
And Dathan shall deliver you their words.

MOSES. Speak, my lord Dathan.

DATH. Ay, my friends, hear these,
The men of Reuben : "*We will not come up.
Is it a small thing, thou hast brought us up
Out of a land flowing with milk and honey
To kill us in this wilderness, except
Thou make thyself in all prince over us ?
Withal thou hast not brought us to a land
Flowing with milk and honey, or given us
Inheritance of vineyards or of fields.
Thinkest to put this people's eyes out ? Nay !
Nay, we will not come up.*"

The Promised Land

This is the word of Reuben, O my friends.
True dignity is in deed. Abide no more.
Betake you to your tents, O Israel!

VOICES. Let us hear Moses first.

OTHERS. Ay, let him speak.

MOSES. Children of Israel, ye have heard these
men.

Behold! I stand before you, in your midst,
And if I e'er have injured one among you,
Stolen his ass, or waited for his life,
Let him stand forth and say it. If ye deem
Dishonour is the measure of my deeds,
Despatch swift vengeance on me. But if so
Ye weary of my service, and would have
Dathan your king, and Korah your high priest,

[*Uproar.*

Slavedom and civil broils—why, say so, bravely!
For know, O Israel, though I have yearned—
Watched o'er you like a mother—these wild
years,

I weary of you. Will the wild ass hear
His master's voice, or turn him back to eat
Bread from his hand? Are not his ears too
gross?—

Run wild, then, 'mid these mountains. Get you
gone.

Be beggars of the ibex and gazelle

ACT IV. Sc. 2. A Drama

For scraps of famine. Let the promised land
Be never nearer—since ye will it so—
Than your false hearts would make it. As for
you,

Korah, and you, ye sons of Levi, hear :
Is it a small thing that God honoured you,
Over all Israel, to be his own,
And stand before the people in his stead ?
Will ye the priesthood also ? Is it for this
Your spleen is stirred against me day and night,
And small heart-burnings move you to defeat
Great ends ye cannot measure ? And for Aaron—
Aaron—why, what is Aaron in your eyes
That ye should murmur against *him* ?—Go to !

KOR. Now, hear, ye people, how this man of yours
Is honeycombed with falsehood to the core !
Hear how he thrusts his brother, who, ye know,
Has ever been his trusted counsellor,
To arm's length of contempt, with *What is
Aaron ?*

RIG. O shame ! I will contain no longer. Listen !
This Korah, who would curvet in your sight
As saviour of your liberties, indeed
Is but your deadly foe. Dathan and he
Are vultures to devour you. For that end
'Gainst Moses do they trump false charges up,
And stand in secret links with Aaron.

The Promised Land

KOR. Liar ! [*Stabs RIGEL.*

RIG. Nay, but you are too late ! The word is out,
And all your villainy exposed.

[*Falls. JOSHUA rushes forward and stabs KORAH. Tumult.*

JOSH. Unsheathe your swords, ye men of Israel !
Slay, slay, and slay these traitors from your
sight !

[*JOSHUA leads an attack on the party of the Rebels. They fight. The Rebels are driven off the Stage. Exeunt fighting all, except MOSES and HUR.*

Enter ZILLAH to RIGEL.

ZIL. My noblest friend !

RIG. O Zillah, I am dead !
Forget me quickly.

ZIL. Nay, within my heart,
Rigel, your love shall like a star in heaven
Shine free of earthly mist or stain for ever,
Imperishable in glory.

RIG. Sweet, farewell ! [*Dies.*

MOSES. Hold, hold ! shed no more blood.

HUR. My lord, their shouts
Are almost out of ear-shot. We must leave
This ulcer to its issue.

[*A pause—the noise dies away.*

ACT IV. Sc. 2. A Drama

MOSES. Hur, I am very weary of this world.

Can one who wades through bloodshed land at
last

Upon the shore of peace, and not defile it ?

My path is stained with slaughter ; for what
end ?

To hold a handful—having slain the rest ?

To teach men justice, mercy, and sweet peace—

Out of a book of blood ? To point the blue

Expanse of stainless heaven, and say that God

Willed earth should be a shambles ? Can it be,

His footsteps are not known, and where He walks

Men see but ruin and unrest for ever ?

How know his work then ? I do think the words

That broke the desert stillness of those days

In Horeb's shadow, when my heart was young,

Are grown a dream now. Faint they sound, and
far ;

The glory fades from earth, and I remain

Alone with my own failure.

HUR. Hark, my lord,
A noise of music ! here comes one with news.

Enter Messenger.

Mess. Hail ! mighty vanquisher ! Revolt is
crushed

In its own adder's den, and Israel

Is once more one.

The Promised Land

- MOSES. Are many slain ?
- MESS. My lord,
They lie in thousands : all are slain, I think,
Who were not of the slayers.
- MOSES. What, can earth
Drink so much blood, and not be black ere this ?
- MESS. By their own tents we buried them, my
lord,
Just as they fell, in undistinguished heaps.
Earth opened wide her mouth and swallowed
them,
Their tent-gear, and their goods ; into the pit
We cast them all, the earth has closed upon them,
And they have perished from among the people.
- MOSES. This is God's doing.
- MESS. And right glorious !
- MOSES. Come, Hur, and let me breathe away this
weight
That sits upon my heart. [Exeunt.

SCENE 3.

Within the Tent of MOSES. Some days later.

MOSES and HUR.

- MOSES. It is all over then ?
- HUR. My lord, she's dead.

ACT IV. Sc. 3. A Drama

I saw her at the last. She did commend
These words unto your ear : " Entreat," she said,
" My brother's pardon ; pray him to forgive
And so forget me. Let him fear no more
A sister's faith : soon shall I take farewell
Where I can hinder him no longer." Then,
As though her eyes, dilating, let her mark
The cloud-land of the future : " Now the path
Opens full clearly, fortune shines," she said ;
" I see the willows dimple in the brooks,
The towers flash greeting, and the graceful palms
Wave welcome to the hosts of Israel.
Bid him arise and have good heart and go
Forward into the future. All is well."
Then the flush left her face, and, with a smile
Of pale and peaceful beauty, she was dead !

MOSES. Why sent you not for me ?

HUR. All was as quick
As I have said it.

MOSES. And before that hour ?

HUR. Always, my lord, in aspect she remained
As when you saw her : frozen seeming at heart,
As though some stony grief was stationed there
And would not be removed.

MOSES. Most grievous was 't.

HUR. And still when I assured her of your love,

The Promised Land

Thrice counting o'er your kindly words to her,
She marked me not, but made as if her mind
Peered through her eyes, and instantly returned
To feed upon its sorrow.

MOSES.

Woe ! alas !

Enter Messenger.

MESS. My lord, I am a bearer of ill tidings !

MOSES. Speak !

MESS. Lord Aaron, your own brother, our high
priest,

Died, by the hand of God, an hour ago.

MOSES. 'Twas sudden, then ?

MESS.

It was, my lord.

MOSES.

Yet not

Unlooked-for by himself. Some mornings since,

Before the congregation, he resigned

His office to his son. Feeble old age

Did prematurely press on him of late.

He will be widely wept for. To the people

He wore a kindly manner, and was ever

Intimate to their wants, which he relieved

With liberal favour. Spake he, at the end ?

MESS. His mind seemed erring painfully o'er the
past.

Few were his words, yet once we heard him say,

“ All must fail in the end : ” and there he ended.

ACT IV. Sc. 3. A Drama

MOSES. Well, God be with him! Let him sleep
henceforth

On Mount Hor, on the summit, opposite
The resting-place reserved for Miriam.
And be there solemn mourning through the
camp
For thirty days. Go and proclaim it now.

[Exit Messenger.]

Then forward. Let the tendrils of the past
Cling no more round our courage. The new
land

Lightens before us. Forward we must go;
And so best be forgetful. Who will live
Must linger not with love and memory,
Lest their sad smiles undo him.

Sister mine,
From all this world farewell! These eyes, these
hands,

This very sense, and all my mortal part
Must weep thy loss for ever. I alone
Shall see thee and not lose thee. These must
shrink,

And, at the end, die, because bitter pain,
Which is their very being, is its own death.
But death beholds not us. So, still, farewell!
Come, Hur, and have good courage. Let us go.

[Exeunt.]

Curtain.

ACT V.

(AFTER AN INTERVAL OF MANY YEARS.)

SCENE I.

Summit of Mount Pisgah—The Hosts of Israel below—In the distance, the Jordan and the Dead Sea ; and, beyond, Jericho in the midst of her palms.

Enter MOSES and JOSHUA.

MOSES. Enough ; rest here and leave me, Joshua :
I will go forward yet a pace or two.

JOSH. My lord, I will not leave you, for your steps
Do falter on the extremity of age ;
And no man knoweth——

MOSES. Joshua, my friend,
Of all who while my purpose yet was young
Had courage with me, you alone remain.
For all your tender service from the first
No words acquit my thanks : I ne'er can thank
you.

You have heaped debts upon me. Now, in this
Life's last remainder, let me rather more

ACT V. SC. I. A Drama

Be lost in your fresh favour, than lay claim
To sway your loyalty. Leave me, I pray.

JOSH. Nay, my lord Moses, I protest.

MOSES. Enough.

Leave me awhile: I will not tarry long.

[Exit] JOSHUA.

MOSES. (*reaching the summit*). One step, no more.

And lo!—It is enough.

Now let me die. Thought even is escaped
Into Thy arms, O God! I have outlived
Evil and good—all mortal energy—
And cannot farther. Failure and defeat
Fade from me, and for ever. Hark! the breeze
Is musical with murmurs from below.
The hosts of Jacob dapple all the plain:
Like little children of to-day they lie
About their camp-fires in the acacia groves,
And count the coming fortunes. Children still,
Fresh to the fair world, beautiful as when
God led them first on Earth, they follow still,
Still follow where he leads them. Even now
The cornfields whiten to their hands, the wells
O'erflow with verdure, and the meads with milk.
All works to some accomplishment; and I
Work too—a child like these—in simple faith
Surrendering my soul to unseen ends.
And the land waits them. Look! the towers
are bright

The Promised Land

Amid the palm-groves, and the land is fair ;
And far the great sea flashes in a line,
Far, far to northward ; ay, and snowy white,
High quivering in the hot air, that is Hermon.
Thus far I falter : the unseen, at length,
Is actual before me. Now my life
Stands quit of its sole purpose, and I pass,
Content, O well contented from the world
To wander, and to sleep from all its troubles !
These will go forward, go, and not in vain ;
The end I know not, covet not to know,
Having known God in the act. Perchance, this
land

Shall see a new state rise, rise nearer heaven,
With pure laws, simple customs, and sweet lives,
To make the dream of human love no dream.
Perchance, for all is hidden but from Him,
The end shall yet be sorrow, blood, and strife,
Strife, blood, and yet more sorrow. He who
hides

The whole world in his counsel looks beyond
The snowy caps of Hermon and the sea !
And sees to-day his children in far lands,
Sees them as near as these, yearns over them,
And touches now their blinded eyes to light.

[A cloud descends upon the mountain.]

My limbs grow faint : life distances me now.
I must descend—and meet the world once more.

Act V. Sc. 2. A Drama

Yet first a moment's rest, for I am weary ;
This cloud will pass, and all will soon be clear.

[The cloud hides MOSES from mortal sight.]

SCENE 2.

*Early morning. At the foot of Pisgah—Before the
Tent of JOSHUA, Captain of the Host.*

ZILLAH comes out of Tent. Enter JOSHUA.

JOSH. There is a stir throughout the camp to-day ;
We have lain idle long enough, and now
Our men will all be moving.

ZIL. What of Moses ?

JOSH. We've searched the mountain, ay, from
base to summit,
But in this mortal world we cannot find him.

ZIL. The rocks are steep and ragged.

JOSH. It may be
Death overtook him on some giddy height,
It may be so—it may be. But my mind
Can frame no image of it. Chance, mishap,
Had no part in his life. He lived near God,
And now he lives, but nearer.

ZIL. All the years
Roll backward from this moment. Do you
mind

The Promised Land

The first days out of Egypt, when his eyes
Were fire because of hope, and men afraid
Almost to look upon him, but they had
No other hope to cling to? I, a child;
You vaunted o'er the stars, young, valorous,
The people's idol. Do you mind the days
That followed those days,—days of suffering,
Death, and dissension, and misunderstanding,
Days not to be recalled save in such light
As now shines round us. For now all is changed,
The fire is in our eyes now. He is gone.
I look on you, and see the whole of love,
With all its discords and its sufferings,
Read backward into music.

JOSH. Have an end;
 A very Lot's wife art thou, little one.

ZIL. I prithee!

JOSH. Well, proceed.

ZIL. Were Miriam
 Beside us now, her word would sure be *forward!*

JOSH. Forward it is. Yet the word is a blank.
 The river flows beneath us, at our feet—
 The land—the land of so much mortal longing—
 Its wild bees gather honey where we stand;
 Yet to move on! to move, and without Moses!
 I am amazed with grief.

ZIL. But you must use

ACT V. Sc. 2. A Drama

Grief's passion to surmount the grief itself.
To fashion out his future is for you,
He watches o'er you.

JOSH. Walking, as at night,
With the innumerable watchful stars
O'erhead, no light below.

ZIL. Courage, I say!
Well-nigh his last word to your ear was *Courage!*

JOSH. Come, I was sickly, but am well again.
Your clear voice, Zillah, rings me to the front
With the old inspiration; for my soul
Is ever in your keeping. Let us go.
This very day, at sunrise, will we hence;
The whole camp waits. I will go give the word.

[*Exeunt.*]

*Enter Captain, Youth, and other Israelites. Some
strike and pack tents in background.*

CAPT. The morning air blows fresh. Awake!
awake!

To-day to new adventures!

YOUTH. No word, then,
Of Moses?

CAPT. No, man.

YOUTH. We have known a god,
And knew it not!

The Promised Land

ISR. How many have I known
Who did desire this day even more than death—
So full of pains their life—to be as we be,
Knee-deep ere mid-day in these shallow fords,
And died desiring!

YOUTH. Who can tell? the land
May be as barren as the one we've left.

CAPT. What, fellow, barren? Can you see these
vines?
When the light grows a little, we shall catch
The bunches on them. Why, the land o'er-
brims
With rich confusion. Corn there is, and oil,
Honey and figs and melons, kid-flesh, fish,
Cucumber, quinces, cattle, innumerable sheep,
And every bird on earth—that is not quail.

YOUTH. This has a curious sound, and delicate.

ISR. Yet wine o'er-towers all. All these I'd sell
For single that, if need were—which is not.

YOUTH. What taste has wine?

ISR. Like nothing mortal else.

YOUTH. Is't cooling to the tongue?

ISR. Cold is its kiss
Upon the lips, but in the heart 'tis fire.

ACT V. Sc. 2. A Drama

YOUTH. Sweet ?

ISR. Sweeter than old malice ; sharp and sweet :
And yet not neither.

YOUTH. By my life, old sir,
This is a strange drink.

ISR. Just to smell of it
Is to forget all grief.

YOUTH. And they who drink ?

ISR. Live in these white-walled palaces, and we——

YOUTH. Must live in place of them ; saving they be,
As some say, giants.

CAPT. Have a heart, my lad ;
Think you that all these wonders have been
worked——

That Moses came to lead us like a god,
And now is gone to heaven—that we've escaped
From slavery, through famine and through fire,
To die now at the gate of Paradise ?
There is some purpose in it, so I say.

YOUTH. Well, I must think so too, although I've
seen
But half of the whole story.

CAPT. Hush, attend !
Here comes our leader ; we must fall in place.
The start will be at sunrise.

The Promised Land

Enter JOSHUA and ZILLAH.

JOSH. Well, my men,
Is all in order ?

CAPT. All, my lord.

JOSH. Throughout
The camp all stand on starting. Do you hear
There is a hush now ? they do hark the sign.

ZIL. Over the mountain, look!—where Moses
was—
The eastern heaven is all aglow, its rays
Dart upward to the zenith.

JOSH. See, that rock!
Methinks he stands there in the golden light,
As in God's bosom, blessing us.

CAPT. Hark !

YOUTH. Hark !
[Flourish of trumpets.]

JOSH. The silver clarions of the morning sound.
Lo ! the sun rises. Forward, evermore !
[Exeunt marching.]

Works by Edward Carpenter :

(Published by SWAN SONNENSCHNEIN & Co. LTD. Those marked * published also by S. CLARKE, Manchester.)

*TOWARDS DEMOCRACY: Complete Poems in four parts. Library Edition, one vol., large crown 8vo, pp. 506, cloth gilt. 3/6 net.

*The same. Pocket Edition, one vol., India paper, limp binding, gilt edge. 3/6 net.

ENGLAND'S IDEAL, and other Papers on Social Subjects. Fifth Edition, 1902, pp. 176. Cloth, 2/6; paper 1/-.

CIVILISATION: ITS CAUSE AND CURE. Essays on Modern Science, etc. Ninth Edition, 1906, pp. 176. Cloth, 2/6; paper 1/-.

*LOVE'S COMING-OF-AGE: a Series of Papers on the Relations of the Sexes. Sixth Edition, 1906, pp. 190. Cloth gilt 3/6 net.

ANGELS' WINGS: Essays on Art and Life, with nine full-page plates, cloth gilt, pp. 248. 4/6 net.

ADAM'S PEAK TO ELEPHANTA: Sketches in Ceylon and India. New Edition, 1903. Cloth gilt, 4/6.

THE STORY OF EROS AND PSYCHE, with first book of Homer's Iliad done into English, and frontispiece. Cloth gilt, 2/6.

*IOLAUS: An Anthology of Friendship. Printed in Old Face Caslon type, with ornamental initials and side notes. New and Enlarged Edition. Cloth gilt, 2/6 net.

CHANTS OF LABOUR: A Songbook for the People, edited by EDWARD CARPENTER. With frontispiece and cover by WALTER CRANE. Paper, 1/-.

Works by Edward Carpenter (continued):

(Published by GEORGE ALLEN.)

THE ART OF CREATION: Essays on the Self and its Powers. Second Edition, enlarged, 1907. Crown 8vo, cloth gilt, pp. 266. 3/6 net.

DAYS WITH WALT WHITMAN, with some Notes on his Life and Work, and three portraits. Crown 8vo, cloth gilt. 3/6 net. 1906.

SKETCHES FROM LIFE IN TOWN AND COUNTRY, with some verses and a portrait of the author. 1908. Cloth gilt, pp. 270, 3/6 net.

(Published by A. C. FIFIELD, 44, Fleet Street, E.C.)

PRISONS, POLICE, AND PUNISHMENT: An Inquiry into the Causes and Treatment of Crime and Criminals. Crown 8vo, cloth, 2/- net. 1905. Paper, 1/- net.

EDWARD CARPENTER; THE MAN AND HIS MESSAGE. Pamphlet by TOM SWAN, with two portraits and copious extracts from the above works. Price 6d. net.

Cornell University Library
PR 4451.P9 1910

The promised land; a drama of a people's



3 1924 013 461 599

o1n

